

SLL Presidential Address (FinalGKC) 17th May 2005
Dr Geoffrey Cook

The Inclusive Society

Introduction

Welcome and good evening to every one on this special AGM. The AGM's of the Society are always very special, but for me this evening is, for obvious reasons special. It is a real honour to be President of a Society that has so many distinguished members and has such an enviable reputation in the international lighting forum.

Although we always try to hold our AGM's in interesting buildings it is getting more and more difficult to find affordable new venues in London; tonight's venue fits the bill in both respects.

With regards to the venue. The canal museum of London is housed in a former ice warehouse built in about 1862-3 for Carlo Gatti, the famous ice cream maker. Gatti may have been the first, or one of the first, to offer ice cream for sale to the public. His first import of Norwegian ice, a consignment of 400 tons, was around 1857. In 1904-6 it was a horse and cart depot. During the war the building was used by AEC as a depot for spare parts for London buses and the building was taken on by the Canal Museum Trust in 1989. This is then, a building with almost as much history as the Society in all its previous manifestations.

The prospect of assuming the role of President was something of a surprise as well as an honour. I have only been actively involved in lighting since 1984, a mere 21 years. My early background was in the construction industry where I contributed to the housing stock of the West Midlands, several other major buildings in Birmingham and the Theatre and Library at Solihull.

My work in the lighting field has been almost exclusively in the academic environment, satisfying my life long interest in teaching and learning. Firstly this was at the Polytechnic in Wolverhampton, where I inherited much of the resources previously used by Kevin Jones and for the last 15 years at the University of Reading. For the last 10 years I have had the privilege of directing the Research Group for Inclusive Environments a team of a dozen or so multi-disciplinary researchers looking at a variety of issues concerning disabled people. My particular interest is in the general lighting, task lighting and emergency lighting provision for people who are visually impaired.

It is this inclusive nature of my work that has influenced my choice of content and title for this address 'The Inclusive society'. I am fortunate to follow on from two distinguished Presidents, David Carter and now in his new role as Past-President, David Burton. I would like to formally thank David Carter for his support for my early research work and for his continuing role with the Society. In particular his management of the highly successful Lighting Masterclasses. I also

wish to thank David Burton for his substantial contribution to the work of the Society during his presidential year, including the establishment of the Society library at UCL and on a personal level for his advice concerning the role and responsibilities of the President. As I will mention later I intend to carry on the work started during the last two years and in that way give continuity to the work of the Society.

My view of this inclusive society is influenced by the way that the work of an academic is assessed. There are four areas:

Teaching. In a Society context, this is continuing the education of the wider community of the role and importance of lighting.

Research. This is our work in the examination of existing and new knowledge to enhance the advice given by the Society through publications and other means. There is also the role of encouraging research into lighting matters

Administration. The operation of the society and the way that the committees function and report in order to influence the policy and direction of the society.

Consultancy. This concerns maintaining the position of influence of the Society in the lighting community. We need to ensure that the Society is the preferred place for authoritative information about lighting.

To be inclusive we need to recognise things external to the society and those that are internal to the society. Firstly,

External issues

There are already established links with other institutions in particular, the ILE, the LIF and the Lighting Association through the regular liaison meetings and the dual membership of SLL members with these institutions. However the links with the ILE has the potential to be strengthened over the coming year as the ILE is programming their technical meetings to coincide with our London sessional meetings and these are to be held at the same venue, The Institution of Structural Engineers headquarters. The ILE welcomes attendance at their Technical meetings of SLL members in the same way that we welcome ILE members to our sessional meetings.

This year I would like to strengthen the links with the ELDA through a working link to their lighting workshop which is to be held in Birmingham in February 2006. Already preliminary meetings have taken place with a view to securing an SLL role in this practical and exciting lighting design event. This offers the Society another practical lighting event to compliment the highly successful 'Ready, Steady - Light' event that Mike Simpson has now taken over.

I fully recognise the contribution made by SLL members in the formulation of European, International, CIE and British standards. Many of these members

have made major contributions to the work of the old CIBSE Lighting Division, and now to the Society, over many years. I take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution. Their work is helping to take the influence of the Society into key arenas and also enables the SLL to be appraised of changes that may influence the technical detail of our work.

The links established by the Past-President with the Parliamentary Lighting group will be developed over the coming year and compliment the CIBSE led series of contacts with government.

Whilst there is nothing new about a proposal for a joint meeting of SLL, ILE, LIF, ELDA, IALD, LA, LET and CIE, this could be a timely event. Particularly when set against the background of a shrinking lighting industry, a reduction in UK based lighting research and the multi-involvement by several SLL members in the work of other institutions. I will work with others to explore the potential for such a joint meeting which could act as an effective national forum for lighting matters in the UK and operate in an inclusive way.

In accordance with the work of all past Presidents and Chairmen, I will continue to press for resources from CIBSE. There has been some progress on this matter over recent years but it is essential that the Society is well resourced.

There is a need for the Society to influence the inclusion of lighting in the educational framework of construction, facilities management and health care professionals. Whilst the work of Jean Heap and all of the Education and Membership committee has raised the profile of lighting education through the establishment of the SLL Diploma, the need to influence the lighting of professional and other national qualification courses remains. The move towards performance based educational frameworks mean that in Higher Education Institutions there is a degree of freedom in the content of courses. Whilst this is generally good, this can result in a downgrading of the lighting content.

Internal issues

There is a need to continue to review the operation of committees of the society. This is a delicate matter and must recognise the need to keep a balance between a voluntary Society and a professional ethos. It is simplistic to call for the introduction of new, and generally younger, people onto the key committees of the Society, since this can only happen when members are enthused to participate, knowing that their contribution is directed at achieving progress, and that they are given time by employers to attend meetings. However to maintain the vitality and inclusiveness of the Society there is a need to keep the committees refreshed. In this regard all members of the Society can play a part in making a personal contribution or identifying suitable candidates. The Society needs you.

There is a need to develop the issue of paying for the authoring of high quality technical publications. For many of the active members involved in the production of Technical publications, their time is literally precious. The opportunity to appoint a technical author to carry forward the work of the various Technical working groups, therefore, requires careful consideration.

Although it may seem to be some time away, the Centenary year of the IES is 2009. It is now time to begin the detailed planning for the events to mark this special occasion. There are a variety of different ways that this could be celebrated and the views of the members, including those members who were previously members of the IES are welcomed. Some details are due to emerge over the coming year.

I am keen to encourage and where necessary to develop a framework for the involvement of members in the nomination of Officials of the society and the Prizes awarded by the society. The involvement of members in these nominations and awards has always existed, although it has generally been perceived as a domain controlled by senior Officials. There is a need to re-state the importance of member involvement in the nomination and awards process with a view to making the whole process more inclusive.

On a more personal level the Society needs to continue to provide lighting guidance appropriate for the inclusive society. The UK society of today includes over 10 million people who are physically or sensory impaired. I am committed to work of the widespread adoption of BS7000 Part 6 Design Management Systems - Guide to Managing Inclusive Design and also to take an active role, on behalf of the Society in the revision of BS8300 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice. This work is due to be completed by the end of 2006. This, and other work, should allow lighting guidance to be included in the new Code for Lighting that is due in 2006.

In Conclusion

I am committed to our Inclusive Society of Light and Lighting and see this as having the following outputs over the next year:

- Continuing liaison with the ILE at the technical meeting level.
- Involvement with the ELDA lighting design workshop
- Working to establish a National Lighting Forum involving the key national and international lighting organisations.
- Review of the appointment of a technical author for our high quality publications.
- To engage with members to ensure their participation in the appointment of senior officers and their proposal of Society award winners.

In looking forward to the year ahead I am conscious of the responsibility of my new role and hope that I carry out the tasks necessary to be a worthy President.