

Chairman's Report - SCI SEG AGM: 8 December 2011

In the third year of operation for the Science and Enterprise Group we have continued to promote and run events of topical interest to the scientific and business community. A highly successful event on Opportunities for Commercialising Drug Discovery was held early in 2011, followed by well supported events on digestate use and management, processing lignocellulosics, bioplastic processing, funding agri innovation and process engineering innovation. A couple of other events are being held before the date of the AGM, including one on the chemistry of textiles. A significant disappointment occurred when the SEG flagship event of 2011 on Innovation to Transform the Chemical Industry, linked with IYC 2011 and co-badged with key chemical industry stakeholders, failed to gain adequate registrations and had to be cancelled. SEG also hosted a joint meeting with CICA in mid-year, allowing an interesting exchange of views and opinions on chemical industry developments.

It has become even clearer that the marketing and promotion of SCI events remains a major challenge. The energy and network of the event organising team is critical but SCI needs to find ways of converting potential participant interest into firm registrations. We can assure a high quality programme of speakers through the contacts and capabilities of SEG members but can we sell it? It is perhaps significant that the most successful events have tended to be 'niche' events which address the exploitation of science in business. With the failure of the mainstream IYC event, the SEG needs to look closely at the positioning and target audience of all future events, but more importantly gauge whether the SCI and SEG brand is adequate yet in commanding attention from the core of UK Chemicals plc. SEG should operate at the focal point for SCI, namely 'where science meets business'. Our failure to date to generate full traction in this regard prompts some interesting questions on the future focus of SEG.

SEG has also contributed in other ways to the society, including the provision of a paper on Mid-Career Support Needs and Opportunities. This was submitted to MDAC for their overall consideration of future services for SCI members. At a recent SEG committee meeting we were pleased to hear from Brian Iddon, retired MP and SCI member, regarding the opportunities for SCI engagement in the political arena. We have also attempted to broaden the engagement of SEG with other SCI members through a variety of mailings. In the current environment, this has proven to be quite challenging although our core of SEG members have worked diligently on furthering the SEH ethos. Hopefully, we can be more successful in future in stimulating SCI members to get involved.

After three years as Chair of SEG I have decided to step down. My replacement will be elected at the SEG AGM on 8 December 2011. I will continue to be involved with SEG matters and the SEG Committee, and be available to support SEG initiatives as needed. At this time I would like to thank and acknowledge the main committee members of SEG for their hard work and support.

Rob Andrew
Chair, Science and Enterprise Group