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Chief Executive, IRSE

Francis How e-mail: francis.how@irse.org

Managing Editor, IRSE NEWS

Ian J Allison

11 Sycamore Road, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3HZ, UK
Tel +44 (0) 7794 879286, e-mail: irsenews@irse.org

Contributing Editors

David Fenner e-mail: d.c.fenner@talk21.com

Ian Mitchell e-mail: ihmitchell@cantab.net

David Stratton e-mail: dstratton@btinternet.com

Assistant Editors

Harry Ostrofsky (Africa)
e-mail: thehzos@icon.co.za

John Aitken (Australasia)
e-mail: john.aitken@irse.org.au

David Thurston (N America)
e-mail: thurston@temple.edu

Mukul Verma (Asia)
e-mail: mrverma@gmail.com

David Fenner (Europe)
e-mail: dc.fenner@talk21.com

Priyank Patel (Younger Members)
e-mail: priyankpatel@tfl.gov.uk

Alexander Patton (Social Media)
e-mail: alexander.patton@siemens.com

Contributions

Articles of a newsworthy or technical nature are always welcome for IRSE NEWS. Members should forward their contributions to one of the Editors listed above

Production, Typeset & Layout

Mark Glover

e-mail: mark@polunnio.co.uk

Advertising

For advertising rates and deadlines call

Andrew Walker at DVV Media

Tel: +44 (0)208 652 5214

e-mail: andrew.walker@dvvmedia.com

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London Office

IRSE, 4th Floor, 1 Birdcage Walk, Westminster, London, SW1H 9JJ, United Kingdom

Enquiries

MEMBERSHIP OR OF A GENERAL NATURE

Tel: +44 (0)20 7808 1180

Fax: +44 (0)20 7808 1196 e-mail: hq@irse.org

LICENSING

Tel: +44 (0)20 7808 1190 e-mail: licensing@irse.org

In my visits to local sections around the world I am always impressed by the thirst for knowledge shown by everyone I meet. I see clear evidence that the rail industry is vibrant, innovative and growing. It is embracing new technologies as well as finding new applications for existing technologies. It also has an urgent need to bring on new talent and upskill its existing practitioners. That is why I am confident that the IRSE has so much to offer the industry, to provide a forum to share knowledge, focus discussion and help close that skills gap.

IRSE NEWS is just one small part of that work but it is good to see how it continues to deliver interesting, relevant and up to date articles and information. It is particularly good to see how the purely technical material is supplemented with discussions of topics that are driving the railways as a business. That speaks to a common concern of many employers, that their engineering professionals should understand their wider business. They need us to use our technical skills to find better ways of meeting the commercial, performance and customer service goals of the railway.

That's what I like to see in the IRSE NEWS. As it's summer here in Australia I'm able to sit outside with a proverbial cold beer at hand to review the draft copy and see what an excellent publication we have for you. I have to declare a slight personal interest in so far as it includes a long overdue article on my visit to the Southern Africa section last year. However, that was another example of what the IRSE can contribute to closing the skills gap in a market where young talent needs our help.

I'm sure you'll find this issue interesting, but also I encourage you to tell your colleagues about it. Do them a favour by introducing them to the IRSE and explaining what it can do for their knowledge, personal network and ultimately their career.

Charles Page, President



Front Cover: In South Africa PRASA's vibrant main line passenger coaches are here to stay, but the suburban train sets and signalling installations are being replaced as part of the countrywide renewal programme. The suburban trains will be even more vibrant and modern, and the signalling systems will be migrated to state of the art electronic installations. Significant investment in this programme has been necessary to meet rising demand for improved services. Photo Felix Lipov/Shutterstock.

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