

Enhancing our impact

As many of you know, I come to the IRSE by way of a career in another safety-critical sector: power generation and transmission. When I began my engineering training, most communication and protection systems were analogue. Over time, we began to adopt digital systems capable of disconnecting faulty equipment from the power transmission network in milliseconds.

Joining the railway sector as it pursues digitalisation is thus, to me as an engineer, an exciting prospect. When I started my apprenticeship, the engineering profession was trying to attract more young people and we still are today. The engineering profession's focus on education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is still as strong. But IRSE President Markus Montigel speaks of "winds of change" and invites us to learn from the past rather than live in it.

He challenges us to build both walls and windmills to harness the wind. This is familiar to one who has built many walls (usually around substations) and windmills, well technically wind turbines,

throughout my career. But I have also built professional relationships in many fields of engineering, including the railway sector. These include the National Skills Academy for Rail, Crossrail, HS2 and the National High-Speed Rail College and at network operators, train operators, signal manufactures, regulators and training institutions throughout the world and I will draw upon my connections to further the work of my predecessors. I led a campaign in the UK to recognise the significant contribution that Engineering Technicians make to the success of so many areas of the engineering profession and I know that to be true in the rail sector. I plan to promote that message more widely.

I have worked in professional engineering institutions long enough to know that every sector has its own language and key concepts. Already, I have been introduced to APS, TPWS and ERTMS, to name a few. All too often, we shroud in mystery the routes to professional qualifications, such as (in the UK) CEng, IEng, EngTech and ICT Tech. To reduce the confusion, I want us to work to simplify and standardise on key

messages that each of us can use when communicating the benefits of being professionals. Anybody can say they are an engineer, but only competent professionals who voluntarily commit to regulation and registration, and are confident enough in their abilities and ethics, can become members of a licensed professional engineering institution like the IRSE.

The global presence of railways presents a massive opportunity for us to engage with like-minded professionals. With over a million route kilometres, the world needs ever-more-efficient digital signalling to safeguard freight, rolling stock, infrastructure and of course passengers, staff and the public. The IRSE has already developed an international profile; I look forward to working with the central team and you, our members, to build on the foundations laid by my predecessors Francis, Colin, Ken, Ray and those before to enhance our global impact as a key player in railway signalling and telecommunications. Collectively we have the power to harness energy from the winds of change and drive the IRSE towards greater things.

Blane Judd, Chief Executive

Cover story

Our front cover this month shows a train leaving Pontresina before ascending through the valley to the Bernina Pass and on to the highest summit of the Eastern Alps of Switzerland at Piz Bernina (4,093 m). Pontresina was the second location of this year's successful IRSE Convention and a full report of the event can be found on page 2.

Pontresina and St Moritz each have two completely different electrification systems meeting at the stations. At Pontresina 11 kV AC powered trains entering the station on the line from Samedan use platforms 1-3, while 1,000 V DC powered Bernina trains use platforms 3-7. Platform 3 has a catenary that can be switched from AC to DC, and a special signal to display to train crews the type of current being used.

Photo Paul Darlington.



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