

CIWEM Presidential Induction Speech 6 September 2007



It is a great honour and privilege to be President of this great Institution. I am looking forward to serving Council and all our members with your support in the coming year. My thanks to Council for electing me and to Nick and the team for their help and encouragement.

I want to record our thanks to Bob Sargent for his term of office. Under Bob's leadership we have made significant strides forward in modernising. We have influenced the environmental debate and grown in confidence.

I am delighted to see so many members of the Rivers and Coastal Group here. I started my career nearly 30 years ago in North West Water Authority and it's a pleasure to see Alan and Jean Glover in the room. Alan was a senior manager at that time and one of the first to kindle my interest in CIWEM's predecessor body. It is 25 years since I attended my first River Engineering Section meeting following the 1982 floods in York. My roots within the Institution are in the Rivers and Coastal Group and I have made many friends and visited many places, including overseas, with the Group. Thank you all for coming today.

This summer has seen exceptional weather even by British standards. Similar extreme weather has affected other parts of Europe and Asia in particular. Millions of people have suffered, many have died, and many environments have been damaged. Personally it has been very demanding. Equally it has been very rewarding when people and environments have been protected or warned as a consequence of intellectual investments over many years by members of CIWEM. Public confidence and

trust in professional institutions are questioned by environmental events and our roles in them. A timely reminder that maintaining a strong intellectual base and advancing science and technology is a great responsibility placed on organisations like CIWEM and its members. The standards we set matter and have direct consequences for millions of people and the environments they depend on across the world.

I have chosen arts and the environment as my Presidential theme. For me this brings together the mind and the soul. Art provides the means for us to express who we are and how we interact with our environment. My key objectives are to:

- Raise awareness of art in the environment.
- Celebrate the contribution art makes to the environmental debate.
- Inspire artists and scientists to work together for environmental benefit.

The visual and performing arts present so many opportunities to advocate the environmental and sustainability agenda. I do encourage all Branches and Groups to organise at least one event on the Presidential theme during my year of office.

I want also to address the moral issues we face as members of a professional institution. Firstly, we must know ourselves. It is essential knowledge, of equal weighting to mathematics, chemistry, etc. because only then can we begin to understand others we work with or have to influence. A professional education is about acquiring knowledge and knowing how to apply it, honing and developing the mind to solve problems and think profound things. In life and work there are also matters of the heart to contend with. Our souls. David Whyte describes it as 'That indefinable essence of a person's spirit and being'. Our employers will have company values. They may be explicit or often not, but always captured in the culture of the organisation. The way we do things around here. CIWEM has its codes of conduct and ethics. These are an expression of our values as a professional institution. As members we have to reconcile our personal values with those of the organisations we work for, work with in partnership and CIWEM. Modern partnerships align values first and other matters such as commercial are secondary. The ideal of course is when these values are all the same

or are broadly aligned. Moral issues arise when another set of values violates our own. This is the stress zone. A fundamental violation will lead to a parting of the ways. Smaller violations will challenge us as we struggle to internalise these differences and reconcile them. It is a human condition and one we all experience and need to recognise in our professional lives. Shakespeare was so right with *All the World's a Stage*. As David Whyte says in his book *The Heart Aroused* 'Work is theatre, the place where life unfolds to our tragic or comic satisfaction'.

Our professional skills are needed now. There is an urgency. The world is facing, according to most scientists and thankfully to an increasing number of politicians and recently economists, its greatest threat – climate change. We can all think global and act local to mitigate climate change. Those of us with professional skills have a special role to play. We are the means by which countries can mitigate and adapt to climate change. We can provide the leadership, the science and solutions to protect the earth against the forces of nature invigorated by man's use of fossil fuels. Our members are working across the world with this fired-up Nature, harnessing its power and using knowledge and technology to protect lives, property and the environments we cherish. CIWEM's mission, values and standards encapsulates all that we need to do to command public trust and confidence. If we are at ease with ourselves, others and life through preservation of the soul, we can, through our membership of CIWEM and art and the environment, bring mind and soul together to achieve a safer sustainable world.

David Rooke