

Moving in the right direction

Dr. Gareth Williams is President of EAGE. We have talked with him about the organisation he has been serving for many years as well as the future of the oil and gas industry.

EAGE stands for the European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers. That is a very broad ambition. Are you able to accommodate the needs of all members?

It is true that our 'mission' is indeed very broad and covers a range of industries and a range of scientific disciplines – geophysics, geology and reservoir engineering – but I think this is one of our key strengths. Many oil companies are organised into 'Asset Teams' containing a range of scientific disciplines so it is important that we reflect this in the events we organise. Our aim is to provide services for specialists in each of the scientific fields while at the same time creating opportunities for the experts to learn from each other and thus optimise the value of each other's work. Also, by working with each of the American societies, AAPG, SEG and SPE, we are improving our offering of conferences, workshops and field trips across the board. So, we are not there yet, but we are certainly moving in the right direction.

EAGE is still by many seen as largely an organization for geophysicists. Do you have any plans to change this and make it more attractive for geologists to join?

We are actively working to re-dress this perception but it takes time for this to happen. I suspect that our actions are a little ahead of perceptions! For example, we are careful to ensure that our committees are composed of all the disciplines we represent. Equally, we have a geologist as President every 3 years, just the same as for geophysicists and engineers. On the other hand, we always need more volunteers, especially geologists. In my mind, liaising with other societies, where we can, will also improve our geological services.

What is the reason that EAGE is now increasing their membership?

From December 2000 to December 2005, our membership has risen from approximately 5500 to 9500. This is a very strong growth that I believe has been caused by many factors. During that time we have expanded rapidly the number of

events we organize each year, improved the quality of our publications, improved our on-line capabilities, incorporated the Near Surface division into the EAGE and bolstered our geological and reservoir services. Geographically, we have also significantly raised our commitment to North Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia and the FSU, and also the Middle East. Earlier this year, we formally opened our Moscow office and our Middle East office was opened early in May. First Break is now available in Russian as well as English. We also have a well-established biennial conference in North Africa.

What do you consider the main tasks of EAGE?

I see two major themes for us. First, we have to provide services for specialists in each of our scientific disciplines and industries while at the same time providing opportunities for the different specialists to interact with experts from other disciplines. Second, we must look to the long term by supporting students already studying geosciences and reservoir engineering and by encouraging more young people to study science in school.

Can you give three reasons why young geoscientists should join the organization?

1: To gain access to our journals, to the reduced registration fees for our various meetings and to our support for students, 2: To establish contacts with fellow members across the range of disciplines, and 3: To contribute to and be part of a society that reaches out across international borders and across scientific disciplines

How do you look upon the future when the need for energy is increasing at the same time as the opposition from environmental groups is also increasing?

To my mind, the petroleum industry performs a valuable service and receives a remarkably and often unjustifiably bad 'press'. Our everyday lives would be very different without our industry and most people would find it a change for the worse. So, we need to change the perception that we



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are ruthless profiteers who will destroy anything in our way if we are allowed to. The way to do this is to engage in discussion and action with environmentalists so that they understand us better and so that we do a better job of protecting both the environment and our valuable, limited hydrocarbon resource.

What do you consider the main issues?

It seems there are 2 distinct areas of concern for environmentalists – first, damage to the environment during exploration and production and second, damage caused by burning of fossil fuels. With regard to the first issue, we have come a long way as an industry but it is undoubtedly true that different environmental standards are still applied in different parts of the world. We must continue to work with all concerned to apply high environmental standards globally. I would hope that a society such as ours – incorporating Near Surface scientists as well as E&P professionals – could contribute to achieving this goal. As for the second issue, it is clear to me that we should use our hydrocarbon resources as efficiently as possible – not least for the sake of our own exploration industry. Once all the oil has been used, it cannot be used again and our industry will be finished. Perhaps our long-term interests are aligned very well with those of the environmentalists after all!