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Getting on(line)

In the 20th century, the way that membership bodies' regional chapters and groups met up in person to share best practice and to network worked really well, and was in keeping with wider society. But in the past 25 years, the digital revolution has transformed work, the way we access information and the way we socialise. To remain relevant, membership bodies need to keep up.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for change in that regard. It has pushed previously-reluctant people to engage with digital, because social distancing requirements have ruled out a physical alternative. During this time, the Society has produced half a dozen online sessions, and the uptake and participation have been fantastic. We've had people dialling in from all over the UK, and from as far as Hong Kong. In fact, they have proven so popular that we've had to upgrade the system's capacity.

For the first time, this year's AGM, now scheduled for 6 October, will be a hybrid affair. The London meeting, where attendance is limited because of social distancing restrictions, will also be broadcast online. Remote attendees can ask questions, and are entitled to vote on agenda items. Hopefully this will enfranchise members that would not normally have the time or the money to travel to London for the event.

In this way, digital is augmenting Society activities, rather than replacing them. This is partly because there are limits to what can be done online. The CV Show, for example, had to be cancelled. People go because they want to see the latest models and

technology available; you need to be in a physical location to do that effectively.

When the pandemic is finally over, hopefully our regional groups can resume their local activities but with the option of also using digital channels to present and share useful content with the wider Society membership. In so doing the Society will expand its reach and capacity.



Bruce McGill
Chief Executive, SOE

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