SAIW and SAIW Certification

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It was a real joy to be able to host our SAIW Awards and Gala Dinner this year. It has been four years since we last gathered for this celebration of success. Congratulations to all those worthy award winners and thanks to all who participated, attended and contributed to making the night memorable. Special thanks also to our sponsors, ESAB and Lincoln Electric.

I hope this dinner will be remembered as a turning point for the SAIW and for the welding industry. We have come through a tough few years but we are now back on the move and stronger. I am particularly pleased with our performance in NDT, for example, which turned a corner in 2022 and is now significantly stronger than it was prior to the Covid pandemic.

We are also replenishing our cash reserves. As a nonprofit company, we need to hold cash reserves for at least nine months, but to ensure SAIW's long-term sustainability we have tended to hold more than that. The reserves have been falling over the past years, but we started to build back in 2022, and, in 2024, will be re-establishing reserves at the preferred level.

Our recovery is complete, and we are more ready than ever to face future challenges.

I would like to draw your attention to our new SAIW Course Prospectus 2024, which we have completely revised to better communicate our offering, with career pathways to help people to make better choices. On the NDT side, for example, there is an excellent introduction by Mark Digby that highlights the importance of taking NDT courses in a preferred order to increase the chances of success. A student may choose to do the NDT methods in any order, but it is best to start with the more concrete ones. Mark suggests starting with Liquid Penetrant Testing (PT), followed by Magnetic Testing (MT) and then Visual Testing (VT), before attempting to do Radiographic (RT), Ultrasonic (UT) and the more advanced methods.

We have also revamped and streamlined our Competent Persons for Pressure Vessels (CP-PV) course. This used to be a six-week course consisting of a foundation week, a core week, and then a four week course on process plant inspection. But this syllabus was originally designed to meet the petrochemical industry's needs, so the industry-led subcommittee set up to oversee the course has changed the syllabus by taking out some of the content that is not needed for general pressure vessel work. So, we now have a new three-week CP-PV syllabus: two weeks and three days of coursework followed by two days of exams, which makes the course much less time intensive and less expensive.

Next year, we will also be trialling an efficient and cost-effective approach to IIW International Welder (IW) programmes. We have found in the past that welding students are reluctant to use virtual welding machines, but we hope a new approach, based on virtual reality computer gaming from a company called Dig in Vision, will change that.

The system uses cloud-based software, a high-end gaming computer, a virtual reality headset and a simple 'torch'. This allows a whole virtual reality welding environment to be created with the job set up inside it. To incentivise its use, we are offering students a 30% discount if they are willing to use this system for 50% of the training time. The model is already proving successful, more resource efficient and cost effective. In addition, the IIW, through the Canadian Welding Bureau, is busy incorporating all the IW course theory.

We are looking forward to an exciting New Year. I invite you all to share it with us.

John Tarboton