

Chair of the Association 2006-2007

On behalf of ASE, may I wish you a good year! 'On behalf of ASE...' is a phrase I will use a great deal over the next year. So what do I mean?

In a time of change for our organisation, as we develop the procedures associated with our new Chartered Status, it is, perhaps, a good time to review what the Association stands for. In the Rules and Byelaws, the 'Objects' of the Association are about these three things:

- improving the teaching of science;
- providing an authoritative medium through which opinions of teachers of science may be expressed on educational matters; and
- affording a means of communication among all persons and bodies of persons concerned with the teaching of science in particular and with education in general.

Written in 1963, these aims continue, rightly, to steer the ASE's work, and I would like to explore some ways in which you and I can further them.

Improving the teaching of science is what ASE is all about. If you work as a technician or teaching assistant, you are doing this every day: by developing or preparing resources, by working with individual pupils, by doing an exciting demonstration. If you are a teacher, every day brings new challenges, and new opportunities to improve your own teaching. As a subject leader, advanced skills teacher, tutor in initial teacher education, provider or presenter of CPD improving science teaching is your chosen vocation. As a member of ASE, it is your *raison d'être*. I never cease to be amazed at the commitment of ASE members to improving the teaching of science. Sometimes, when grafting away on a committee somewhere, talking about finance for instance (my least favourite topic of discussion), one can seem far removed from improving the experience for learners, but behind every ASE activity this is the ultimate aim.

Over the coming year, one of my contributions to improving the teaching of science will be to continue to present sessions at ASE conferences – 'the best value-for-money INSET in the land'! If you have never presented at a conference, why not consider it with colleagues, if you are too nervous to go solo? Last year, a group of primary teachers from Blackpool (where I am science adviser) ran a session at the Northern Area conference. I promised to have some activities 'up my sleeve' in case they dried up. I didn't get a minute! Alternatively, how about volunteering to promote an event, host one or help on the reception desk? The list goes on. Just contact your Field Officer to find out how you can get involved.

As Chair of the Association, one of the key responsibilities is to represent you, the members. At this time of considerable public interest in science education, your views are crucial. Since I became Chair Elect, and Chair of NAIGS, ASE has been consulted on changes to the curriculum, professional standards for teachers, the Treasury's Science and Innovation Investment Framework, a House of Lords' inquiry, to name but a few. Members have been able to contribute to these consultations, especially via regional representatives on Council. If you work in a secondary school, you can contribute to such consultations by completing the National Science Database on the ASE website that aims to gather information about provision in schools across the country (see *EiS* April 2006). The findings strengthen ASE's authority in talking about issues such as recruitment and retention, teaching outside specialisms, deployment of technicians, funding, etc. Contributors get information back, enabling comparisons between provision in their school and others... powerful stuff! It is important that members feel their views are important: over the next year, on behalf of ASE, I will be working



Charlotte Clarke

with others to establish new procedures for consulting with you. If you have any comments on this subject, please e-mail me: charlotte.clarke@blackpool.gov.uk.

On behalf of ASE, and at your service,
Charlotte Clarke.

Charlotte's web: a rather unconventional route to the ASE Chair

- 1982 Enjoyed school, especially chemistry, and obtained decent O levels.
- 1982–84 Disengaged with science A levels, so left school with poor qualifications. Undertook a chemistry HND at Manchester Polytechnic.
- 1986–89 Worked as an analytical chemist. Studied part time for GRSC (Graduate of the Royal Society of Chemistry).
- 1989–1990 PGCE course.
- 1990–1998 Teaching: Bradford middle schools.
- 1998–2002 Teacher adviser in Lancashire. Involved with ASE, through presenting at conferences. Served on NW Region and NAIGS Committees. Admitted as an MRSC and CChem.
- 2002–present Adviser/Inspector Blackpool Council.
- 2005–06 Chair of NAIGS.