

2005 has been year of change and unpredictability for EPBBA Committee. The sad passing of Chairman, Brian Willey left a huge void in the organization and he will be truly missed by all who knew him. Fortunately, another stalwart, Mike Nugent, offered (coerced?) to step into the breach by taking the Chair, while also continuing as Events Secretary, at least in the short term. Unfortunately, Mike has now announced that he will be departing EP in December for pastures new – Dubai. Mike looked after the Events portfolio for over three years and did a fine job. He continued this good work during his short tenure in the Chair and will be greatly missed for both his contribution and his sense of humour – follow that I hear him say!! We all wish Mike well in his future ventures and he can rest assured that he will be high on the list when we are seeking out prizes for future events.

After over 10 years on the Committee, primarily as Chairman of the Jubail Group, I have offered to step into the breach until the AGM and I will do my best, along with the rest of the Committee, to ensure that the high standards are maintained. Looking forward to 2006, we will continue to provide opportunities to meet socially in both Jubail and Khobar (and sometimes Bahrain!) as this is the essential ingredient in maintaining a useful network of business contacts. Providing assistance to the BTO in supporting both inward and outward trade missions, as well as other business visitors, will also continue to be high on our agenda. We also need to be creative in finding new ways of stimulating the business side of EPBBA activities and this will be an area of our focus and challenge during 2006.

Finally, Saudi Arabia is potentially moving into an area of significant growth particularly in the petrochemical sector. ARAMCO and SABIC are indicating impressive forward plans that will establish Saudi Arabia as one of the largest global players in the petrochemical market. This is exemplified by plans to double the size of Jubail with the introduction of new ventures producing more downstream products. Low feedstock prices and potential advantages arising from entry into WTO will continue to give Saudi a competitive edge into the foreseeable future. This can be expected to spill over into other sectors as internal markets open up eg insurance, finance, support services etc.

In conjunction with BTO we will endeavour to explore ways to better connect British businesses with the emerging opportunities that will be arising. This will also provide an opportunity for enhancing the cooperation between other British Business Groups and I look forward to working with one and all to fly the flag for UK.

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