

## **FORWARD BY THE CHIEF NAVAL ENGINEER OFFICER**

Circumstances have resulted in a quick change of CNEO. I am delighted to take on the role and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the future. As with my predecessors, my door is always open for you to contact me in any way you feel appropriate to ensure I have the broadest understanding of our engineering business.

My thanks go to REAR ADMIRAL Ric CHEADLE for his time as CNEO. Importantly for me he set up the CNEO's Conference that I am sure you all enjoyed, and for which I am enormously grateful. The themes of that conference reflected in a most apposite manner the current issues of interest to Naval Engineers. Current times are always interesting times and we need to ensure that we are focussed on resolving today's problems.

People remain the most important single factor. The challenge of the next few years is to rebalance and restructure our branch where necessary, whilst retaining key fighting capability. The rating structure needs urgent attention to maintain a viable supply of technicians with the right skills. The officer corps must make better use at sea of the junior officers and give them the front line experience they need. We have the right people looking at these problems but the challenges they face are not easily overcome and the emerging answers will change many of the traditional structures we have all known so well. The evolution of TOPMAST into the Navy Board's personnel Change Programme has lifted the uncertainty that many of us had felt about the future for engineers. But that has not removed our obligation to make better and more effective use of the talents of our people – whilst ensuring a fulfilling and attractive career structure. Change is always with us; I look to you all to help get it right.

As military engineers we must not forget the principle reason for our existence is to maintain our ships, aircraft and submarines so that they are capable of conducting operations. We saw this at its very best during OP TELIC where innovation by those at sea and on the ground enabled British Maritime Forces to achieve some outstanding availability. Innovation was indeed another theme at the conference and is another area I am keen to champion. We have excellent schemes in the service to encourage innovation but we must make the most of them.

Our profession is the exploitation of technology. The Conference also gave us a refreshing opportunity to keep up to date with some areas of fast changing technology. This is one way of maintaining our continuous obligation to personal development. The Institutions, who were also on display at the Conference are another means of helping us to do this, and benchmark our activities against the wider engineering world. This journal is our own source of update in the aspects of engineering which are more specific to the Naval and warship arena.

It is my privilege to introduce this issue, which I hope you will enjoy and learn from.