Institution of MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

How to arrange a visit to CERN, Geneva
By Delali Dei, Young Member Chair Sussex & Surrey panel

Rationale
I had read articles and watched TV programmes about the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN and whilst thinking of potential technical visits for our young members panel, added it to the list. I had no idea how to organise the visit or fund it but set about contacting the CERN visits service anyway to make sure in the first place that they would be willing to host us. They responded and were indeed very willing to host us!

The Plan
The visit must be booked through the CERN outreach website at this link - http://outreach.web.cern.ch/outreach/visites/groupes.html If the booking form is not available at this link then it may mean they are over-booked for that period. Email the visits service at visits.service@cern.ch and they will email you with another booking link.

Costing
There is no cost for visiting CERN. The only costs were our transport, plus as we had gone all the way to Geneva, we decided to stay the night. CERN accommodation cost around £38 per night which was great value for the good quality rooms we had. Our regional committee offered us partial funding which went a long way towards enabling us to make the trip.

Attendance
CERN accepts group sizes from 8 – 48 persons. We had 13 people in our group, which was easily manageable and great for networking.

General
This visit truly was fantastic. We were lucky enough to have a tour guide who was a particle physicist, and so focused on the technical aspects of the LHC. At times the physics content was a little heavy for those of us engineers who hadn't done pure physics for some time but nonetheless fascinating.

To start with, we were given a lecture on the history of CERN and the LHC, some of the challenges that were faced during the construction of the facility – it's not everyday someone decides to build a tunnel 50 – 175 metres under the surface of the earth.

We were told about the challenges behind accelerating the particles to effectively the speed of light, causing them to collide, and sifting through the vast amount of data from the collisions to collect what is perceived to be the most relevant data. Not only that, colliding the particles and collecting the data causes vast amounts of heat to be dissipated, which calls for special super-cooling effects to be applied. A more detailed report can be found at here www.imeche.org/news/archives/13-01-30/Young_members_visit_Large_Hadron_Collider.aspx?WT.mc_id=EM_130055
After the tour, we had dinner together at CERN and boarded a tram into the centre of Geneva for a few drinks and networking session.