

Future rental conference

Last month, the CPA hosted an industry-wide conference for both members and non members alike on the future of equipment rental in the construction industry, with speakers discussing ways to understand and influence the future of the industry. The association said that given the positive reception from delegates it is looking at holding similar events in the future.

A vision of the future

The UK government's chief construction advisor Peter Hansford, provided delegates with an update on 'Construction 2025' - a vision for improvement within the construction industry.

Initially announced in September 2012, and published in July 2013, Construction 2025 calls for a 50 percent reduction in construction times, a 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gases, a 50 percent reduction in the trade gap between construction imports and exports and a 33 percent drop in costs. Hansford also called on the industry to transform its image in order to attract new people and to embrace diversity when looking for new employees. At present, just 14 percent of UK construction workers are female and only two percent come from ethnic minorities.

"This is not about reducing margins, but reducing waste, doing things more efficiently. This is about thinking and doing things very differently.

Construction is important for the UK economy. It provides £90 billion per annum to the UK economy and safeguards three million jobs - 10 percent of the workforce. The important message now, is that the Government gets this," said Hansford.



Peter Hansford

Improving H&S statistics

Philip White, the Health & Safety Executive's chief inspector of construction, was keen to point out how far construction has come in the 40 years since the Health & Safety at Work Act came into force. He also spoke of the HSE's updated Construction, Design and Management (CDM) regulations, due to be released next April, and promised CPA members that they would see fewer, but better targeted, inspections in future.

White said: "There is no change in the standards on construction sites. The key changes are around the issue of coordination of health and safety prior to construction starting. We need better focus on traffic routes, trained signallers, improved selection of plant plus competent operators and qualified supervisors."



HSE's chief inspector of construction Philip White.

The training challenge

Stephen Radley, director of policy and strategic planning at the Construction Industry Training Board, spoke on the importance of training the workforce as the industry continues to recover from recession.

With a reported 390,000 people leaving the industry during the downturn and a further 410,000 due to retire in the next five years, the CITB is reviewing how it works and how it responds to the changing needs of the industry.

Radley said: "The CITB has to develop a greater understanding of what the future will look like for construction. Employers say that legislation, regulation and new technology are the drivers for change. We are also expecting new technologies to require new skills."



Stephen Radley

Adopting technologies

Part of the focus of the conference was discussing technology that will influence and shape the future of construction. To help delegates understand current and future technologies, MGF engineering director Steve Hesketh, and Laing O'Rourke principal digital engineer, Elliot Mawbey, both spoke on digital modelling.

Building Information Modelling (BIM) and 3D modelling is a process of using information and design data to model everything from individual components to complex projects, allowing companies to not only visualise the project but also identify and eliminate potential problems that might arise later down the line.

Hesketh, said: "It's not as expensive as people might think. Everyone is going to have to be digitally connected eventually, but there are huge opportunities for plant hire. Web-based collaborative working will become the norm in the future. You will have the latest data from site and all that data will be stored in the Cloud for anyone to access."

Grounds for concern

The Strategic Forum has launched its Ground Conditions for Construction Plant good practice guide. The 73 page document has been developed in co-operation with a number of national associations to provide clear guidance on the assessment of ground conditions and the measures that can be taken to both improve ground and reduce loads imposed on the ground. A four page summary of the guide is due to be published by the end of the year.

To view or download the document visit:
<http://www.cpa.uk.net/sfpsg/#Groundconditions>

