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Developing Skills for the Future

The CPA Training On Plant In Construction (TOPIC) group has hosted an industry forum to help formulate a framework for the future direction of skills and training for those involved with construction equipment, including those supervising, managing, operating and maintaining it.

This first event held at Nuthurst Grange Hotel in Warwickshire, was attended by more than 70 people from hirers, manufacturers, contractors, commercial training providers and other organisations. The aim of the forum was to provide a platform for the discussion and sharing of issues and factors around the skills and training agenda and to bring together those either needing, affected by, delivering or setting standards of skills for equipment training.

The forum was led by the chairman of the TOPIC group, Bob Harper, of A-Plant, while speakers included, Paul Whitehead from Highways England, Paul Allman from Hawk group, Ed Hudson of Liebherr, Michael Bashford from Costain, Simon Keen from Reaseheath College and George Walton from Keith Cook Training.

Factors raised included the quality and availability of skilled workers, Brexit, the issues of finding candidates genuinely interested in the industry, supporting existing employees, the desire to attract more diverse workforces, ageing workers approaching retirement and confusion surrounding standards. Following the presentations delegates participated in a number of group discussions covering the themes

and issues raised and to identify core issues that require further development.

A number of key issues emerged from the group discussions included:

- Implementing new technology to attract new people to the construction equipment industry
- Engaging with micro-businesses
- Standardisation of qualifications and card schemes
- Articulating career choices
- Customers' limited understanding of the operational aspects of equipment
- Marketing of career choices and meeting expectations

Kevin Minton of the CPA said: "This is the first time that we have held a forum of this type to help formulate a skills strategy for the future, but it was a great success and provoked interesting debate regarding the recruitment, training, development and retention of a skilled workforce in the equipment hire sector. The next step will be for the TOPIC group to take away the themes instigated in the forum to investigate and develop them further. Some very knowledgeable participants were involved in the discussions and made extremely positive and valuable contributions. We'd like to thank everyone who attended the forum."

Kevin Minton promoted to chief executive

Kevin Minton has been promoted to chief executive of the CPA, replacing outgoing chief executive Colin Wood, who decided to step down at the end of March. Minton joined the CPA in 2007 as a senior manager before being promoted to director in 2013.

In his new role he reports to the CPA's governing council and will work alongside the president and chairman to shape and ensure the continuing success of the association. Minton has represented the association on CONIAC, the HSE's leading policy committee for the construction sector, and led the establishment of the Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group. He also instigated CPA's apprentice awards event Stars of the Future, and the CPA Plant Conference.

CPA president, Brian Jones added: "My first task as president was to help prepare the association for the future, and so I am pleased that Council has chosen Kevin Minton to take on the role of chief executive. Kevin has already taken the lead on many projects which have moved CPA forward. On behalf of CPA Council, I congratulate Kevin on his appointment, and I wish him every success in his new role."



Kevin Minton

European Crane Operator Licence Update

The European crane and heavy haulage association, ESTA, is close to the final stages of producing the training and assessment programme and intends to have the ECOL programme registered and recognised within the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) at Level 2. A training programme has been devised, based initially on UK CPCS standard, along with practical and theoretical testing programmes. Experienced and qualified operators, with a recognised certificate - such as CPCS - can forgo full training, simply topping up areas not covered within the original programme - but they must pass the test before an ECOL certificate can be issued.

The ECOL Foundation - the managers of the scheme - will accredit both training organisations and assessment centres, although centres that train an operator cannot test the same individual. Although the training and testing can be undertaken in the local language, part of the knowledge test requires the identification of crane terminology in English. Although currently only for mobile cranes, other types will follow.

The pilots for the training and testing programmes are currently underway with an expectation that the programme will be rolled out towards the end of this year. The CPA is seeking interested training or assessment providers to participate in the programme. Interested parties should contact Peter Brown at peter.brown@cpa.uk.net

