Quentin Leiper
Honorary Editor

Editorial

Q. Leiper

On behalf of the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Advisory Panel (listed on the inside cover), I am delighted to welcome you to the first issue of *Engineering Sustainability*. Publication of this journal is one of the many steps being taken by our Institution to help develop a knowledge base and an understanding of what sustainability is for our profession and the wider society.

What is sustainability? How should we, as engineers, respond to the call from society, Government and NGOs for the delivery of 'sustainable development'? Can we influence the development of the built environment in a way that does not deplete or contaminate the earth's resources, while balancing this with the social needs of all its people, now and for future generations?

The answer to this question is exemplified in the words of Janet Barber, at the launch of the second stage report of the *Engineers for the twenty first century inquiry* in February 2003: 'If you want to make a real change, engineering is the profession for you'.

What is known is that, in the UK, we are consuming something like six times our share of the natural resources of the world, that buildings consume 50% of our energy and that our construction industry creates 70 million tonnes of waste every year. We also know that smart thinking and design can deliver buildings and civil engineering projects that use less resources and less energy. Evidence shows that patients recover more quickly in hospitals with excellence in interior and landscape design. Productivity is higher if an employer shows respect for people by training and developing them properly and by providing a good working environment. A tidy site is a safer and more efficient site. As responsible engineers, we should design for excellence, not just compliance, when considering safety in the construction, use, maintenance and demolition phases. By taking a more sustainable approach we can all do better.

This issue is introduced by Brian Wilson, Minister of State for Energy and Construction, who sets out the Government's perspective on sustainability, which is further developed in the briefing note by Brian Bender of DEFRA.

The Editorial Board has followed the style of other ICE *Proceedings* by introducing a mix of papers and briefing notes. It is hoped that the opportunity to write briefing notes will enable authors to identify new trends, share best practice and report on research activities at an earlier stage.

The Editorial Board wishes to encourage our members to consider how they, as individuals, can help make the step change required to deliver more sustainable solutions for society. As engineers, we have a great responsibility and opportunity to create the infrastructure all society's needs. In creating that infrastructure—the fabric of our society—we affect communities, consume resources, create waste and consume energy. In this journal, we want to share the knowledge that will help all of us to recognise the issues to be addressed and understand how we can respond to them. The young engineers involved in the *Engineers for the twenty first century inquiry*¹ report and the follow up inquiry have challenged us all to adopt a more sustainable approach.

This is a challenge we must all face.

I believe we can, as Ghandi said; '*be the change we want to see in the world*'.

REFERENCE

1. *The Engineer of the 21st Century Inquiry—Engineers for Sustainability*, Forum for the Future, July 2000, http://www.theforumelab.org.uk/uploadstore/Engineers_for_Sustainability.pdf