Putting civil engineering at the centre of improving construction's image

Mike Petter of the UK's Considerate Constructors Scheme says civil engineers play a vital role in supporting the scheme's objectives to promote a more positive perception of the construction industry in the UK and Ireland.

The latest statistics show that the construction industry in the UK contributes £113 billion in economic output, representing 6% of the national total (Rhodes, 2018). In Ireland, the industry was worth €7.2 billion in gross value added to the economy in 2017 (Central Statistics Office, 2018). There is therefore no doubt that for the UK and Ireland to grow and flourish, construction needs to continue to happen – and quickly.

What is absolutely central to construction's future growth is the image of the industry. How the sector is viewed by the current workforce (which represents around 2.4 million people or 7% of the UK total) and the public's perception are crucial.

As the UK and Ireland continue to build, a larger workforce across construction is urgently required – around 232 000 additional people are needed across the sector over the next 5 years in the UK alone. In light of Britain's exit from the European Union, the potential consequences to the future supply of the much-needed workforce means that creating a positive image

of the construction industry is arguably now more important than ever before.

Central role for civils

Civil engineers play a central role in contributing to promoting a positive image of the construction industry. In 2018, infrastructure projects accounted for 12% of all construction orders, worth over £120 billion in the UK. But to attract new recruits, the profession needs to be an attractive industry, and at the heart of this is the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS).

The scheme was established in 1997 by the construction industry with the objective of improving the image and changing perceptions of the industry. It works through voluntary registration of construction projects, companies, subcontractors, suppliers and professional service organisations. Every organisation agrees to abide by its *Code of Considerate Practice* (CCS, 2018) and is monitored by industry professionals on their performance in respect of the code. Each year, the scheme makes around 18 000 monitoring visits to sites,

companies and suppliers across the UK and Ireland.

CCS plays a key role in promoting the industry's positive image. It is proud to be supporting and championing an ever-improving industry, where standards are raised year on year. In autumn 2018, the scheme launched its international 'Promoting construction' campaign to encourage everyone involved in the built environment to use the hashtag *#loveconstruction* in their social media posts.

Collaboration with ICE

Collaboration with the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) has also been pivotal in addressing pressing environmental issues such as air pollution caused by construction activity. In 2018, the scheme, with the support of ICE, launched 'Spotlight on air pollution' to drive awareness and action by civil engineers and the wider construction industry on mitigating the impact of air pollution arising from construction activity.

However, there is still much more to be done to elevate construction's image and reputation as an exciting, rewarding and progressive sector to work in. As civil engineering provides the building blocks for society to develop, so it is also at the very foundation of improving the image of construction.

References

- Central Statistics Office (2018) *National Income and Expenditure 2017*. Central Statistics Office, Dublin, Ireland.
- CCS (Considerate Constructors Scheme) (2018) *Code of Considerate Practice*. See <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/ccs-ltd/code-of-considerate-practice-2/> (accessed 27/02/2019).
- Rhodes C (2018) *Construction Industry: Statistics and Policy*. House of Commons, London, UK, Briefing paper no. 01432.

The Considerate Constructors Scheme makes over 18 000 monitoring visits to civil engineering and construction sites in the UK and Ireland each year