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Editorial

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The Institution of Civil Engineers and its fellow institutions have long advocated that engineers should be more than technical experts. The engineering professions constantly stress the need for their members to develop an understanding of the wider context for, and impact of, their work. Thankfully, conversations between young engineers in any modern design or site office show that this doctrine is being realised in practice. There is just as likely to be a discussion on sustainability, social impact, programme and project management, health and safety and risk management, or cost control and asset management, as there is on bending moments or the skid resistance of carriageways.

Indeed, the municipal engineering profession is arguably the most all-embracing of those influencing the shape of the built environment. Municipal engineers are involved in every aspect of asset creation and management, from the formulation of policy through conceiving projects and establishing their feasibility, to their construction and maintenance. We can genuinely be said to have an impact on everything from 'policy to potholes'.

This issue of *Municipal Engineer* neatly demonstrates this breadth of skills, knowledge and influence within the profession, and the willingness of individual practitioners to push the boundaries in securing best value from infrastructure.

The briefing 'Measuring the value of design' sets the scene by recognising that coordination and clear leadership in design, by municipal engineers and others, is essential if the infrastructure we deliver is to command the respect and admiration of clients and users alike.

The importance of effective national policies, and of the municipal engineering profession using these effectively to drive the overall development and management of our macro-environment, is well illustrated by the paper on 'Implementing Planning Policy Statement 6' on planning for town centres. There is not an individual in the UK or elsewhere that does not, at some stage of their life, depend on access to a town centre, and municipal engineers carry a considerable share of the responsibility for keeping them vital and viable.

Once a public or private body has decided on the programme of works in which it is going to invest, it immediately assumes a responsibility to its stakeholders to deliver these in an effective,

economic and efficient way. The paper on 'Managing projects: the role of a project support office' rightly questions whether this happens in practice and illustrates how performance can be improved through a more structured and disciplined approach by municipal engineers and others alike.

Sustainability is a much, and all too often glibly, used word. It is therefore extremely refreshing that the paper on 'The first sustainable industrial building projects' advocates specific indicators, and an overall 'environmental sustainability index' for buildings to encourage genuinely sustainable design.

Financial planning and budget and cost control should always be a priority for municipal engineers. The papers on 'Cost forecast model for sewer infrastructure' and on 'Evaluating the financial health of construction contractors' show how the systematic collection and analysis of data on the condition of infrastructure and on the financial standing of contractors can guide decisions on the effective deployment of resources for maintenance and construction.

Thankfully, health and safety is now generally considered to be as important by the modern construction industry as cost control. The paper on 'Safety culture in the construction industry' highlights that, even with strong health and safety legislation, it is the culture and ethics of an organisation that determines its performance against health and safety indicators. The paper outlines a toolkit to help organisations meet these needs, and municipal engineers should be at the forefront in using such tools.

If a profession is to be truly influential, it must not be scared to court controversy. This issue finishes with a forceful paper on 'Sickness in government science: case, cause and cure' that does precisely that, and which it can only be hoped will provoke strong reaction from readers.

The papers in this issue illustrate that municipal engineers are, indeed, influencing everything from policy to potholes and making a significant contribution to achieving best value from infrastructure on behalf of the stakeholders and communities we serve. As such an influential profession, we should perhaps ask ourselves why we do not have an equally high profile in the eyes of those stakeholders and communities. One reason is undoubtedly that we fail to shout enough about our capabilities and achievements. It is the aim of the Editorial Advisory Panel for

Municipal Engineer to encourage more members of the profession, from the youngest graduate to the most seasoned manager who struggles to remember when he or she last practiced any 'real' engineering, to do so through the pages of this journal and linked events. Future issues will be covering some genuinely exciting and topical themes, from 'Climate change' to 'Planning for major sporting events' and we would strongly encourage you to respond to the calls for papers for these and other issues.

Finally, it is with deep regret that we record the death in July of Mike Kendrick, one of those seasoned managers and a regular contributor to ICE *Proceedings*. As a genuine leader in the municipal engineering field and, fittingly, co-author of an article in the June issue of *Municipal Engineer*, the Editorial Advisory Panel wishes to express their heartfelt appreciation of everything Mike brought to the profession over a long and distinguished career. He will be long remembered.