



Dear MPA Members,

A theme of the Major Projects Association's events over the last few months has been how to drive sustainable and responsible growth. The subject was debated by our two speakers at the Prestige event in July. We followed up with a 'charette' ('a workshop devoted to a concentrated effort to solve a problem' – to quote Wiki) on designing more sustainable cities; and then our annual conference tackled various issues under the heading of 'Sustainability and the Circular Economy'.

I would like to think that we are at least in parallel with the pace of 'Extinction Rebellion' in this arena, if not ahead of them; and without belittling their good

intentions, our approach is based on pragmatism and deliverability (i.e. what will actually work).

There is much more to be done, and we have set ourselves a series of tasks arising from the Conference including:

- Creating a network of sustainability champions amongst our members.
- Publishing guides to existing terminology and existing tools.
- Identifying practical sustainability codes or protocols which members may consider adopting.
- Further events on related subjects in 2020.

Work on our digital strategy, to which I referred in last year's message, continues. 2020 will see significant improvements to our website including, we hope, bringing the Knowledge Hub and the website together. We are very grateful for the suggestions and practical assistance we have had from members in this area.

My sense is that public confidence in the UK's major projects has taken a dip in 2019, not least because of the delays to Crossrail and rising costs of HS2. The great majority of projects are delivering well, but we are all affected by the few which hit the headlines. There are no simple answers to this – no PR exercise will reassure people. It's all about good, consistent delivery, with demonstrably beneficial outcomes. We must all play our part in this.

The Association is making steady progress on gender diversity. The male/female split in both speakers and attendees at our events is now close to 60/40. That ratio is not necessarily reflected in the balance of employees in our members and we are pursuing a number of initiatives to promote opportunities for women in the major projects world, again in a pragmatic and deliverable way.

It is disappointing to note that at time of writing, the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement is still to pass through Parliament. But achieving that milestone then leads to highly complex negotiations over our future trading and other relationships with the EU. So the uncertainty will not be over for some time. Last year I quoted the 20th century business guru Doris Day (*'Que sera, sera'*) and perhaps I will finish this year by quoting her equally philosophical but slightly more proactive contemporary, Bing Crosby – *'You have to accentuate the positive, and eliminate the negative – don't mess with Mr In-between.'*

Good luck everyone.



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