

PERSPECTIVES

a mouchel publication

Issue 6 - August 2010

Treading a Fiennes line

Sir Ranulph balances risk and recklessness

3Rs in RedR

Martin McCann explains his three-pronged approach to disaster: respond, resource and rebuild

Weathering the storm

Senior executives of four UK companies pass on their wisdom in the wake of a world recession

SCISSORED SISTERS ■ TAKING THE LONG VIEW ■ RISKY BUSINESS ■ DRIVING DOWN RISK
■ TOP GEAR ■ HIGHWAY LOW RISK ■ WE'VE GOT THE POWER ■ GRAND PLANS

Worth the risk

Risk – it's what makes the wheels of business turn and what makes life the great adventure that, undeniably, it is. Risk underpins just about every business decision we make; our capacity to identify, analyse and control risk being the difference between what can be a great investment or a really bad deal.

A certain amount of risk is motivating, healthy and liberating in both our business and our private lives. It's when the prerogative to take risks is misappropriated that the wheels don't so much slow down as come right off. We saw this in an all too real way when the banks took some reckless chances with our money. And, as a company that works closely with much of the UK public sector, we've been left to help gather up the pieces of a financial crisis that's ended up in delays and cuts to public projects and public services up and down the country.

Irrespective of your view on this, we are where we are and at Mouchel we are looking at the opportunities it creates, as well as the threats. Town hall debates are around how reduced spending can be equated with improved services but in the long-run we will surely see a new way of assessing how, why and what UK citizens are served.

For many years – and until recently – there were fixed views about which services should be provided by municipal government and which should be the domain of the 'commercial' sector. Of course, the private sector had a part to play in delivering the biggest capital projects in construction and IT. But in the last decade or so, we've seen the private sector playing an increasingly important role in delivering a greater range of public services than ever before, many in areas which would previously have been inaccessible to commercial organisations.

We think that the current financial crisis in which the public sector finds itself is almost certainly going to be solved through still greater collaboration with the private sector, whose 'commercial' skills and more flexible business models are what is needed to unlock some of the challenges we face.

And this takes us neatly back to the whole concept of risk. Some risks no doubt sit best with the public sector, whose revenue-raising powers and political perspective place it in a position where the private sector can never go. It's the place of our elected representatives to determine policy and direction – but beyond this, the application of these decisions can be



done equally well, and in some cases better, with (or by) the private sector. Some risks have, of course, to be retained by our councils and government agencies; but many can be transferred. In the long run, this can mean more certainty and economic stability for public sector bodies and more opportunity for private sector firms like Mouchel.

But getting this risk balance right is never easy and so many factors influence our decision making. There's the whole debate about what public service is all about and what is sacrosanct in our municipal government structure. Then there are other debates surrounding affordability, risk transfer and service transformation; tackling those difficult questions about what citizens should expect and what they can do without.

These are the issues that, for the next few years, will be hot topics of conversation for the public and private sector alike. Our new Government is asking what we think and we shouldn't miss the debate. All sides will need to adopt a different position towards risk – and the counteracting forces of 'reward'.

Mouchel is responding to these new challenges, repositioning our business for the future. We think we have the right perspective on risk and that's why we've chosen to devote this edition of *Perspectives* to provide you with a few different views on what we consider to be a topic worth discussing.

Richard Culbert

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This document is printed on paper originating from managed sustainable plantations. This paper is also chlorine-free and acid-free, and is both recyclable and biodegradable.

Printing

Middlesbrough advertising and design,
 Mouchel, 3rd floor, Middlesbrough House, 50 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2YQ

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Getty Images, Mouchel, Ian Parnell, Ben Rice, Shutterstock, Graham Taylor, Stephen Venables, Colin Whittock

Art direction and graphic design by the Mouchel in-house team

Cover picture courtesy of Ian Parnell



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Treading a Fiennes line

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Sir Ranulph Fiennes gives tips on how to achieve the right balance between risk and recklessness



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Treading a Fine

Whether scaling the north face of the Eiger or making a simple business decision, the ability to tell the difference between calculated risk and mere recklessness is fundamental to success. **Sir Ranulph Fiennes** explains why eliminating reckless behaviour is so important and gives his tips on achieving the right balance between instinct and insight

I make my living mostly through talking at business conferences arranged weeks or months in advance through speakers' agencies. During the Iceland volcano chaos I needed to take a calculated risk. There was a conference in Athens the next Tuesday followed on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday by three UK conferences. Although most airlines had resumed flights, there was a danger that wind changes or renewed eruptions might suddenly strand me in Greece. To go or not to go?

If stranded, I would miss three conferences, incur the wrath of the relevant agencies and clients and risk heavy compensation claims. On the other hand, if I missed the Athens event, that agency and client would undoubtedly spread the word that I was a wimp and not to be relied on.

It was a business Catch-22 situation that equated to many a dilemma I've encountered during expeditions in remote regions. Sometimes there is no time to make a careful risk assessment as to how best to deal with, or avoid, an imminent disaster. Instinctive reactions then click in, which may, or may not, prove apt and effective.

After more than 30 years of risk-taking, whether calculated or rough-and-ready, I drew up a list of guidelines that I found most helpful when dealing with risks, either when alone or when leading a team. They include:

- Go for the line of least resistance.
- Aim high but start out with caution.
- Don't relax too soon.
- Be observant in readiness to react.
- When taking on a new job, make sure your predecessor tells you all the costly lessons that he or she has learned.
- Be flexible most of the time, but remember that one option is to be inflexible some of the time.
- If you find a rotten apple in your team, get rid of it instantly. This will lower the risk factor.
- If you are to be held responsible for other people's safety, check them out up front as thoroughly as you would your own child.

- It's easier to avoid fear than to overcome it and to circumvent likely obstacles rather than to confront them.
- When planning for a future likely to involve unpredictable factors allow for the worst-case scenario.
- Balance short-term caution against long-term dangers. It may be better to press on today, even if the conditions are risky, to avoid even greater hazards tomorrow.
- When the experts' advice is contradictory, keep an open mind, balance all likely factors, plan for a bad scenario and then opt for the best compromise. Once you've made your decision, stick to your guns.
- There are times when it's better to err on the side of caution just as, at other times, the risk option is preferable. In either case, the leader needs to trust his instinct – based, ideally, on experience.
- Try never to move against the opposition, whether human or environmental, until the odds are stacked in your favour.
- Know when to turn back and live to fight another day. Better to be a live donkey than a dead lion.

All of these tips are secondary to the ability to recognise the sometimes knife-edge difference between a calculated risk and mere recklessness. For an amateur climber to scale the north face of the Eiger would be reckless if attempted solo, but a reasonable risk if guided by an expert. Taking a measured risk of this sort can be rewarding and furnish you with a sizeable chunk of self-confidence in all your subsequent dealings with the twists and turns of life.

So, next time you experience an inner hankering to take on something big and worthwhile, providing you first assess that the odds are reasonable, go for it! (I went to Greece!)

Sir Ranulph Fiennes, OBE, is a British adventurer and holder of several endurance records. He was the first person to visit both the north and south poles by surface means and the first to completely cross Antarctica on foot. In May 2009, at the age of 65, he climbed to the summit of Mount Everest

annes line



“ for an amateur climber to scale the north face of the Eiger would be reckless if attempted solo, but a reasonable risk if guided by an expert ”

© STEPHEN VENABLES



Weathering the storm

In times of recession, some sectors will always remain resilient, for example the demand for healthcare, food and alcohol remains constant. But how do companies that are reliant on discretionary spending cope with a slowing economy?

Hannah Doran speaks to chief executives and directors of four companies about what lessons can be learned when the going gets tough

The manufacturer:

Emma Bridgewater is a British manufacturer of earthenware and homewares based in Staffordshire. Founded 25 years ago by husband and wife team Emma Bridgewater and Matthew Rice, its distinctive style of English design has seen sales grow to £11m in 2010, an increase of 33 per cent over the last year. Co-founder and Director Matthew Rice explains how they bucked the trend.

'When we were starting out as a manufacturing firm located in Britain, we were laughed at for being archaic: everyone else was mechanising and re-locating their manufacturing abroad. Though our company is considered to be romantic, we're actually very customer-facing and responsive. People can visit our factory and meet the person who made their child's first mug ten years ago. Factories abroad come and go; we plug on and still produce every piece of pottery by hand. And because we manufacture our own goods, we can test the market by trying 50 of something and, if it goes down well, we can try 50 more before investing further.

'We're not as affected by the recession as other firms have been as we don't produce £500 items; our products cost perhaps a tenth of that. But the economic climate has prompted us to become more consumer-driven, to think more carefully. We are informed by customers' choices as well as designing the things we want to buy. This has been particularly true in the past five years.

'The recession has prompted us to develop

new ideas and expand our lines – we now produce homewares and stationery that have exactly the same design standards as our earthenware and for which people have a real appetite. Obviously there's some disadvantage to making everything by hand and, even though our linen is still produced in Stoke, other products, such as stationery, are made elsewhere. If they're more affordable, this opens up access to new customers, for example we now have products that children can buy.

'But the recession has taught us to stick to our guns and do what we believe in – where we have gone "off message", things haven't worked. We've been very careful about brand marriages; just putting the names of two designers together doesn't automatically create a good product. There has to be a real connection. We produce a product with integrity.'

The retailer:

Simon Fowler is Managing Director of Peter Jones department store in Sloane Square and a Partner on the John Lewis Partnership Board. John Lewis owns 29 stores in the UK as well as the Waitrose supermarkets, and has an annual turnover of more than £7.4bn.

'John Lewis is a very different type of company due to its partnership structure (the 70,000 permanent staff are shareholders in the business) and therefore we are able to approach business decisions in a different way. Whereas some of our competitors are forced into knee-jerk reactions because of economic circumstances, we

plan for the long term and take our time making decisions. Our structure is one of the buffers that give us space, so we don't take any different decisions purely because of a downturn. We have a very clear plan of where we want to be.

'But there have been some direct consequences of the recession: we had (and still have) plans to create new department stores, but found that developers have cut back because of lack of investment and credit. They're waiting for the economy to recover and so we've had to look for new ways to expand our accessibility. We chose instead to develop smaller out-of-town stores, where, because of the uncertain economic climate, new locations have become available. We focused on one of our most popular departments and opened our first homewares store in Poole, Dorset; we'll follow with similar stores elsewhere.

'A couple of years ago we undertook the biggest piece of consumer research by a UK retailer and as a result introduced a lower value range of John Lewis goods. The research revealed that consumers not only wanted a lower entry price point, but also to shop in a new way. We have evolved along with this drive by offering multi-channel shopping. We launched our internet shopping about eight years ago and have kept it connected to the stores so that people can shop online one day and collect in store the next. We were surprised, but pleased, by the high level of interest in this.

'Likewise, this customer input asked us to "dial up" the engagement and increase the "warmth" between the company and shoppers – our



recent TV advertising campaign, featuring a John Lewis consumer throughout her life, is a reflection of this. Consumers really want to trust in times of economic downturn and with less disposable income they like to feel that they are spending it carefully.

'The recession has seen a vindication of what we've always done. The lesson has been to reinforce what we do well while not being slow to get into new markets: a form of reinvention through evolving.'

The start-up:

Chief Executive Joe Cohen founded Seatwave in 2006. It is now the leading online marketplace for the resale of concert and sport tickets, with sites in the UK and across Europe.

'We're a marketplace for tickets for sell-out events and consumers are clearly less likely to splash out during a downturn; there's much less desire for expensive products. But there are some counter-trends which provide us with opportunities for growth. For example, people are less likely to go abroad on holiday, but may visit London for a weekend and see a gig instead, and this benefits us of course. Another benefit is that we're able to spend less on prime-time marketing. TV and radio advertising is essential for us to get across our message and further our long-term growth, and we're now able to get a better price and more value for money.'

'But the economic downturn also means that we take a longer view of growth – we're not looking at what happens next month but over the next 24 months.'

'For me, this means focusing the business narrowly on our core proposition, which is pre-

senting ourselves as a marketplace, rather than a retailer. We've also looked very hard internally as to where we can improve and provide a better service for our sellers and buyers.'

'The threats you face in every business environment are particularly acute in a recession: competitors will offer cheaper alternatives and we have also tested the waters in this area. For example, we've created a lower price entry for consumers through tie-in deals with products such as MTV's 'Rock Band' game, where we offered a free Seatwave voucher.'

'What have we learned? You can't chase a market that's not there. You can't create greater demand from fewer people. You have to know where the market's going and how to adapt to it and influence it.'

The service provider:

Chief Executive Richard Cuthbert explains the ongoing impact of the economic downturn on Mouchel's core business of providing consultancy and business services to the UK public sector.

'Our strategy was designed with good times and bad times in mind. We have a long-term relationship with the public sector whereby we deliver vital infrastructure – the kinds of services that people need day in, day out, and therefore the client base should always be there. Yes, we miss out on the boom times – projects such as building iconic structures – but we also miss out on the bust. We didn't anticipate such a deep recession, but we will weather it.'

'Clients have had to rein back and, particularly post-election, there has been a knee-jerk reaction to the political uncertainty. There have

been some contracts cancelled and bids stopped mid process. There is some sense of a temporary panic. Eighteen months ago, people said to us, "Isn't it great that you're so reliant on the public sector?" Now we're told, "Isn't it terrible that you're so reliant on the public sector?"'

'But there'll be an increase in opportunities; the public sector needs to deliver more for less. Local government will be looking to outsource the risk of guaranteeing its services and we're confident about our position here. Our acquisition of a BPO firm was not made with the recession in mind, but it now means that we're well placed to bid for large-bundle contracts.'

'We've responded to the economic climate by trying to be more flexible. Our cost-base is basically people and Mouchel has always relied on a large base of permanent staff with 10-15 per cent of the workforce consisting of contractors. Freelancers are easy to cut when times are tough, but we've learnt that we need that flexibility. Hence we've been encouraging different ways of working such as part-time work and sabbaticals, which also suit some of our employees' needs.'

'Furthermore, we have more than 100 offices throughout the country: when we win, say, a five-year regional contract, the local authority likes suppliers to be just over the road, but that situation can't carry on. We're looking to create bigger hubs and reduce our property base as part of a wider programme of rationalisation.'

'We've also learned the need to stick to our original strategy. In 2003, we were ready to wind down our projects in Dubai. Instead we got caught up in that incredible boom and grew from 20 to 800 people in four years. The boom was lovely while it lasted but the bust has been painful for everyone.'

'We've spent the last couple of years installing SAP across the group, replacing our core financial reporting systems and bringing us up to date. This will provide better information on our suppliers and means, for example, that the standard procurement of everything from office supplies to travel will be much more efficient. I expect this to give us savings of £2-3m.'

Hannah Doran is a freelance journalist

“ people can visit our factory
and meet the person who
made their child's first mug ”
ten years ago

3Rs in RedR

Each year, millions of people around the world have their lives torn apart by natural disaster and conflict. **Martin McCann**, chief executive of international relief charity RedR, explains how education and a planned local response to risk can help to mitigate impact

Disasters hit the world's poorest communities the hardest and without the capacity to respond locally, millions of lives and livelihoods are devastated. While the role of UK and other international aid workers is still crucial in relief efforts, the importance of developing local capacity to prepare for, and manage, the risk of disasters, as well as different aspects of a disaster response, is becoming increasingly acknowledged. In recognition of this, RedR has just launched a new campaign – Respond, Resource, Rebuild – focusing on the importance of developing skills of local aid workers and communities directly affected by natural disasters and conflict.

We provide training across a variety of fields aimed at developing local capacity. This includes disaster risk management and preparedness; hygiene education to manage the risk of disease; and security and risk management advice to relief organisations operating in insecure environments.

The benefits of our training were demonstrated in November 2008 when a severe cyclone and flash flood – believed to be the worst for 50 years -- hit the Jaffna and Vanni regions in northern Sri Lanka. We had been delivering disaster management training in the region since 2005.

'RedR's training workshops stressed the importance of pre-emergency tasks and, with this in mind, we took all necessary precautions,' explains Kandasamy Senthoran, SOND (Social Organisation Networking for Development) Project Manager. 'We knew the cyclone was on its way and before it hit we'd already relocated villagers, potentially saving their lives and preventing extensive damage to their personal belongings.'

Now in its sixth year, the RedR programme is having a real impact and there is continuous demand for training in disaster preparedness and response. From the beginning of 2008 to the end of 2009, nearly 1,000 Sri Lankans were trained in these areas.

More recently, we've been working in partnership with French charity Bioforce to help the people of Haiti, following the earthquake

that struck the country in January, killing around 230,000. Together with Bioforce, we've been providing training in key areas, such as logistics, water; sanitation and hygiene; shelter; humanitarian standards; communications; and safety and security.

With more than a million people made homeless and living in temporary, overcrowded settlements, one of the most urgent interventions has been managing the risk of diseases such as cholera and acute diarrhoea.

Magdala Jean Baptiste, a Haitian teacher working as Education Coordinator for the charity Save the Children, attended RedR's hygiene promotion training. 'I passed on what I learnt to our community mobilisation teams, who in turn have arranged hygiene education in schools for teachers, students and parental committees. In total, we've educated 1,228 people, who will each teach 30 people in their communities about the importance of good hygiene in preventing the spread of disease. This means that we will have reached 36,840 Haitians as a result of just one RedR training session.'

This year, RedR is celebrating its 30th anniversary, after being founded in 1980 by engineer Peter Guthrie, who, following a work assignment in a Malaysian refugee camp for Vietnamese boat people, realised the critical need for engineers and other technical professionals in emergency relief. Since then, RedR has responded to disasters of all kinds, both conflict-related and natural, and has been present at most of the recent major rapid-onset disasters and many of the ongoing crises around the world.

This year, along with activities in Haiti, RedR has also opened a new programme in Pakistan to help support the vast humanitarian community in the country.

Martin McCann is chief executive of RedR

To donate to RedR's latest Respond, Resource, Rebuild campaign, or to support the charity's work, please visit www.redr.org.uk/geilnvolved or contact fundraising@redr.org.uk. For more information on RedR membership, please contact info@redr.org.uk



“ we will have reached 36,840 Haitians as a result of just one RedR training session ”



Nkombo, Rwanda – Martyn Harris



In 2009, I joined Rwanda Aid, a small, UK-based charity operating in the remote and desperately poor south west of Rwanda.

In February 2008, a series of earthquakes struck Rwanda, near the border town of Cyangugu. The epicentre was the small island of Nkombo on Lake Kivu. On my first visit to the country, a year after the event, I was shocked to discover hundreds of families still living in appalling conditions in shelters thrown together out of branches, tarpaulins and tin sheets – which were certainly no match for the torrential rains that affected the region.

In response to the earthquakes, Rwanda Aid launched an appeal to build new homes and, with the help of two British volunteer architects, had built 12 new houses by the end of 2009.

As well as disaster relief, one of Rwanda Aid's priorities is encouraging sustainable development through 'capacity building' – improving the technical knowledge of the people in areas of education, welfare, healthcare and farming.

As part of this longer-term initiative, I launched a design competition in 2009 to encourage engineers, architects, environmentalists and builders to submit their ideas for low-cost housing in developing countries. The winning, entry, submitted by a 'design cooperative' of architects and engineers, used earth-filled bags as the main building material.

With a low environmental impact, requiring no structural timber, no fired bricks and minimal cement, the proposed houses comprised circular domes with no separate roof structure. Earth bags are inherently strong and earthquake resistant, and building techniques using these can be easily learned and transferred, ensuring that they become more accessible in the future.

The design competition winners and I plan to build a prototype home to demonstrate the viability of the new design, which we hope will be adapted for other countries where low-cost, sustainable housing is required and where a quick solution is needed in times of disaster. My goal for 2010 is to build a further 12 homes on Nkombo, which would improve living conditions for more than a 100 people.

Martyn Harris is a Senior Contract Advisor and Claims Expert working for Mouchel in Ethiopia. You can contact him at nkombo.housing@googlemail.com

Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/NkomboHousing/

Scissored Sisters

Demolition of any building is dangerous, but when it comes to tower blocks, the risks are increased. **Karen Stevens** talks to **David Lynch** about his part in razing 'The Three Sisters' towers in Rochdale



What comes to mind for many people when they think about the demolition of high-rise buildings is the dramatic 'controlled implosions' first seen in the sixties and seventies. However, using explosives (or fire in the case of steeplejack Fred Dibnah) to implode buildings is a complex and skilled process and getting it wrong can be disastrous. If an implosion is not properly contained, it can damage neighbouring structures, and flying debris can cause injury to passers-by.

Because of the dangers of working with explosives, most contractors today opt for floor-by-floor deconstruction of high-rise buildings, adopting 'high balling' (a wrecking ball on a crane) or, increasingly, long-reach mechanical demolition. The latter was the method chosen by the Impact Partnership (a joint venture between Rochdale Council and Mouchel) for dismantling three 1960s tower blocks at Langley Estate in Middleton, Rochdale.

The 12-storey towers, known locally as 'The Three Sisters', were being demolished as part of a multi-million pound regeneration scheme, but with so many other buildings nearby, blowing them up wasn't an option.

'The shock wave created by an implosion would have caused surrounding windows to shatter and there would have been further danger from falling debris,' explains David Lynch, building surveyor for Impact, who project managed the contract.

The fact that there were two bungalows just yards away from the towers, which the client (Rochdale's Strategic Housing Department) wanted to retain, made the project even more difficult. 'The proximity of these bungalows and the fact that their residents wished to remain in their homes throughout the demolition meant that additional safety measures had to be adopted,' says David. 'For example, the contractor had to encase both dwellings in scaffolding to protect them from falling debris. There was also a 10ft soil bank built around their rear so that concrete falling from the blocks would be cushioned rather than bouncing uncontrollably.'

Before demolition work could begin, Impact's structural surveyors carried out a full risk assessment. In addition, David arranged for gas and electricity supplies to be disconnected and for abandoned furniture and personal belongings to be removed. 'It looked as though there had been a bomb scare; many of the residents had moved out without taking anything with them – each tower contained 12 skips



“ a giant dinosaur,
chewing away at
the flats from the
top down ”

worth of abandoned personal effects to dispose of,' he says.

'Impact also set up a comprehensive traffic management scheme, so that wagons carrying rubble from the site travelled outside school drop-off and collection times. We timed the demolition to coincide with the construction of a new housing development so that we could share the same access road, thereby reducing disruption; and we even spoke to the local church to ensure that there were no funerals planned, which might be disturbed by site traffic,' David adds.

Demolition began in February with the arrival of the UK's third largest high-reach excavator. The machine weighed 80 tonnes and had to be transported to the site in two sections, accompanied by a police escort. David describes it as 'a giant dinosaur, chewing away at the flats from the top down.' He adds: 'We couldn't erect scaffolding around the tower as this would impede the operator, and so had to rely entirely on his skill for the safe dismantling of the building.'

At the same time as chewing away at the fabric of the building, the excavator constantly sprayed it with water from two huge pumps. 'The spray reached up to 100ft and helped to control dust, which is always a nuisance to surrounding homes when carrying out demolition work.'

According to David, 99 per cent of all the material from the three tow-

ers will be recycled, with much of the concrete going to produce hardcore for the foundations of the new Metrolink between Manchester and Oldham/Rochdale. This is all part of a new 'green' approach to demolishing buildings, which aims to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill sites by preserving materials for reuse or – in the case of glass and plastic – recycling.

Any method of demolition chosen will depend on constraints imposed by the structure itself, the surrounding environment and costs, but David is impressed by the long-reach excavator, the reduced risk and inconvenience caused to local residents, and the speed at which it worked – all three towers were razed within a month. He is confident that the best method was adopted at Langley. As testament to the project's success, Impact has already been approached by other local authorities, such as Blackpool Council, which has sought advice for the demolition of some of its coastal housing.

*Karen Stevens is Mouchel's Publications Manager
David Lynch is Building Surveyor in Impact Partnership's property services team*

Taking the long view

Winston Churchill once said about the study of history: ‘the further back you look the further ahead you can see’. It’s a sentiment shared by today’s conservation and heritage professionals who try to understand and revitalise our most historic buildings and make them safe and serviceable for new generations. **Paul Murrell** talks to Mouchel’s Heritage Team about its approach

There’s an incredible amount of national history in listed buildings,’ says Simon McCudden, Mouchel’s Technical Director for Heritage, and he cites as an example Oldham Town Hall, where Winston Churchill was elected an MP in 1900.

‘Back in September 2008, the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* spoke of ‘The crumbling shame of our town hall’. It had been out of use since 1995

and was in desperate need of remedial works. Unity Partnership, Mouchel’s joint venture with Oldham Council, has been carrying out ‘urgent works’ to the rapidly deteriorating, grade II-listed Town Hall since late 2009 – works that were needed due to structural failure of roof trusses and the threat of a major roof collapse.

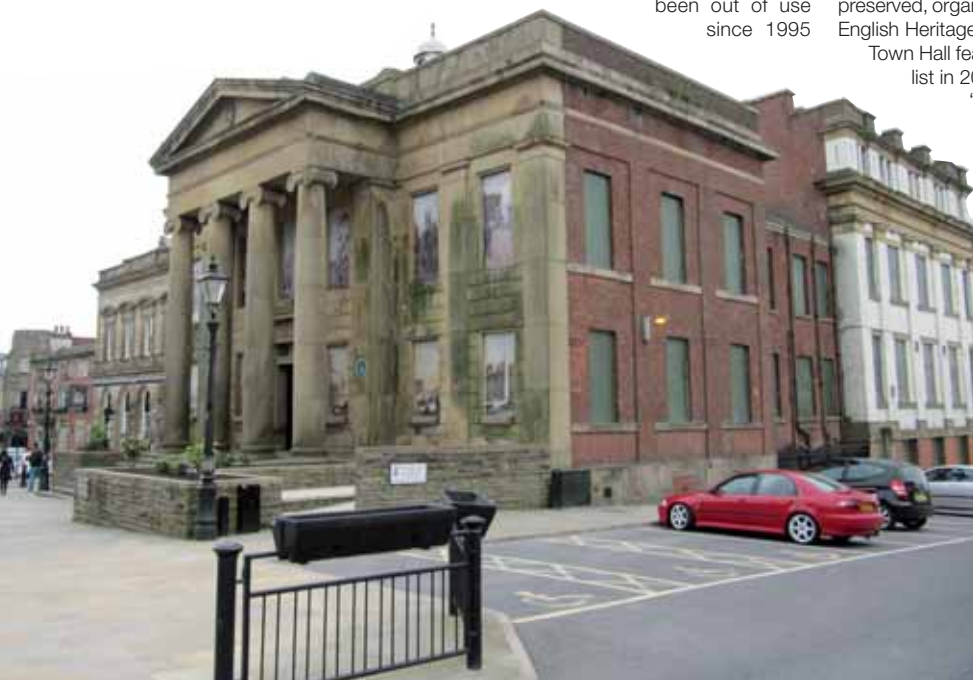
To highlight the plight of buildings such as Oldham Town Hall and to ensure that places of historical importance are preserved, organisations such as the Victorian Society and English Heritage compile ‘Buildings at Risk’ registers (the Town Hall featured at the top of the Victorian Society’s list in 2009).

‘There’s an increased focus on cutting public spending, but – in the case of listed buildings – they cannot be wilfully neglected and owners have a duty to undertake appropriate repairs and maintenance,’ says Simon. There’s no getting around it. Wherever the money comes from, maintenance work has to be done and, depending on the type of works, consents need to be applied for.

‘We’re trying to understand the basics of these buildings,’ says Simon. ‘In simple terms, we’re taking them apart and putting them back together again. Our teams are helping clients to look at their potential uses, considering their heritage value and the cost of any on-going maintenance.’

The Heritage Team has been in place for two years and looks at the structure itself: the plasterwork, the features, and the ‘heritage value’.

‘While the Conservation Engineering Team will focus on the design and struc-





tural integrity of a building,' says Simon, 'the wider team can draw on the wealth of different skills and experience across Mouchel. Through working together, we can begin to establish best practice and focus our efforts on something that celebrates not only the history of a particular building or area – but also its future.'

But Buildings at Risk registers are not just filled with civic monuments and stately homes, modest buildings feature too. For example Liverpool's 'Rope Walks' (so-called because its long, narrow streets were used in the manufacture of rope for sailing ships) contains numerous listed buildings. Many of these once neglected Georgian terraces have become popular for various uses in a now fashionable quarter of the city.

Michael McDermot, Senior Building Surveyor at Mouchel, explains, 'The Rope Walks area is a mix of public squares and open spaces and narrow streets of Georgian buildings. It has attracted many bars and restaurants and become a trendy area with a desirable L1 postcode, but there were many dangerous buildings in states of serious disrepair that needed to be looked at before this transformation was possible.'

Ian Weir, Divisional Manager of the Building Division at 2020 Liverpool and one of just 20 conservation accredited engineers in the country, adds, 'It's important to understand with these projects that, just because a wall is leaning over, doesn't necessarily mean it needs to be taken down and rebuilt. We'll determine whether it's structurally sound in the state that it's in. Despite the fact we're working to current safety standards, we can't, and wouldn't want to, apply many of today's regulations to ancient and historic locations. It's why modern-day visitors to Pisa aren't met with a perfectly upright tower.'

Liverpool is unusual, not only in the sheer number of its historical monuments, but also in the way that it's able to fund urgent works to those in worst condition. 'Seven years ago the Northwest Regional Development Agency awarded Liverpool City Council £1m to move forward urgent repairs. It now has a rolling, self-perpetuating pot of money (generated by the Council's ability to recover money spent under statutory notice) to use for carrying out temporary holding works to the city's important monuments. Because of this arrangement, there's a real commitment to conservation in Liverpool. Usually councils have one full-time conservation officer, but Liverpool has seven, so it's able to do much that other councils can't.'

Another neglected structure can be found in Denbigh, Wales, on the front of Gwasg Gee – or 'Gee Press' – which was home to the first print works in Wales and a major champion of the Welsh language. Compared to other projects, Gwasg Gee is nowhere near as architecturally significant, but, as Ian makes clear, 'We're not just looking at the

“ it's why modern-day visitors to Pisa aren't met with a perfectly upright tower ”

architectural merit of a property – sometimes that aspect of the project may be non-existent – but also trying to preserve it for its historical interest.

'The biggest part of our work in heritage and conservation lies in understanding the places that we're restoring. Once we've grasped what a structure means and represents, we're better placed to carry out works and ensure that future use takes into account everything that it has been through to reach its current stage. We'll consider advice from all quarters. It's important to remain open-minded for the good of the project.'

Simon McCudden is echoing this approach by setting-up a 'Heritage Best Practice Group' that will meet regularly to share experience and discuss the way forward. 'Much of our work, particularly in the case of Oldham Town Hall, is leading the way within Mouchel. Our diversity as a company, and our willingness to listen, is an opportunity to bring colleagues together and this enables us to learn and grow as one team and ensures a stable and bright future for some of the most important and beautiful buildings this country has to offer.

'Furthermore, the introduction of the new Planning Statement PPS5 will require an understanding of many listed and unlisted buildings prior to any planning permission; it will be vital that works are carried out by professionals with an appreciation of the heritage asset and its significance.'

Paul Murrell is Publications Advisor at Mouchel

Simon McCudden is Mouchel's Technical Director for Heritage

Michael McDermot is Senior Building Surveyor at Mouchel

Ian Weir is Divisional Manager of 2020 Liverpool's Building Division

Risky business

Insurance is one mechanism for mitigating risk but did you read the small print when you took out your policy?

Matt Hinckley talks to **Belinda Totton** about his role in helping insurance companies ensure that cover is correct when things go wrong

When the now infamous Eyjafjalajokull volcano spewed its ash into the atmosphere earlier this year, thousands of holiday makers reached into their bags and rucksacks to check their insurance documentation. It was only then that many of them discovered what the policy actually covered. Likewise, in the world of business, company insurance policies sometimes receive attention only after the event.

Assessing the cost of reinstating property damage following major insurance losses can be tricky. Disasters can take many forms, and it can be difficult – and expensive – to cover every eventuality; for example, to what level does an insurance policy cover the insured for fire, flood, earthquake, explosions, mechanical malfunction, hurricanes, or acts of terrorism?

These kinds of disasters are a familiar sight for Mouchel's specialist Insurance Services Team. For two decades, its members have travelled the world at a moment's notice in order to provide engineering, quantity and cost advisory services to insurers and loss adjusters.

It is imperative that the team travels quickly to any site to carry out its independent checks of the damage caused by a disaster. 'It's no good waiting weeks after an incident to visit the site,' says Matt Hinckley, Mouchel engineer and team member. 'The fundamental basis of most insurance policies is for reinstatement like-for-like and we need to see evidence of what was there five minutes before the loss. We need to see the property first hand, before anyone has decided to, perhaps, demolish damaged buildings or remove machinery for closer inspection.'

On the ground, and after an initial technical survey of the site is complete, the team calls in appropriately skilled 'reinforcements'. These specialists may be sourced from within Mouchel's extensive consulting and business services group, or externally from its list of trusted niche consultants.

'We are also used to working with local owners and firms of engineers, quantity surveyors, cost consultants and other experts so that we can better understand

local issues,' Matt says. 'The availability and unit costs of plant, materials and labour varies widely from country to country, and often from area to area too.'

As the detailed technical inspection progresses, it is at this stage that the all-important small print on the insurance policy comes into play. Does it require that the damaged structure be repaired purely like-for-like, or is there cover for compliance with current codes and regulations? Are any elements of the liabilities capped at a certain cost? Is the company covered for 'business interruption', a compensatory payment to the company while its facilities are out of use?


Such policy contents make a huge difference to the way reinstatement is completed, and the Mouchel team receives guidance on all such policy issues from the loss adjuster. While the team's initial arrival on site, and its initial technical survey, is undertaken swiftly, the final resolution of a claim can take time. This is a situation familiar to Matt, who has monitored some huge and well-known projects from start to finish – sometimes over several years.

While Matt hints that some things he has seen would make great anecdotes, he remains discreet as the nature of his work is sensitive. However, he can reveal that he's inspected far more sites of fires, explosions and mechanical failures than natural disasters such as earthquakes – although the devastation, and geographical size, of the latter tend to be greater.

It is clear that he is well travelled. From the Americas to the Far East, the job has taken him from bakeries to power stations. But 'there's no such thing as a typical project,' he says. 'The process may be the same, and the end result the same, but no two jobs are the same.' He wouldn't have it any other way.

Belinda Totton is press officer for Mouchel's Regulated Industries business

Matt Hinckley is a member of Mouchel's Insurance Service's team



“ he's inspected far more sites of fire, explosions and mechanical failure than natural disasters ”

Driving down risk



It would be easy to imagine in a company such as Mouchel that the areas of high risk for staff would be associated with construction, but in a predominantly white-collar organisation, employees are at greatest risk when behind the wheel of their car. **Ian Parker** argues for more proactive management of occupational road safety

Britain is a relatively safe place in which to drive, even compared with other developed nations. But there were approximately 248,000 road casualties in 2007, of which around 1,500 fatalities were drivers (50 per cent of all fatalities).

Up to a third of all road traffic accidents involve people 'at work' according to the Health and Safety Executive. This could account for up to 20 fatalities and 250 serious injuries every week in Britain. Yet most employers believe that, provided their drivers have a licence and their vehicles have a valid MoT certificate and full service history, they've discharged their responsibility for employee safety.

Not so. The *Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)* places clear obligations on employers to ensure 'so far as is reasonably practicable' the health and safety of employees while at work; and this includes time spent driving.

Employers also have legal responsibilities for other road users who may be put at risk by their employees' activities. Under associated Management Regulations, they are required to assess regularly the risks to which employees and others are exposed. This responsibility extends to employees when they are pedestrians and cyclists too.

At Mouchel, recognising the impact of occupational road risk on our business has led to us to reappraise how we assess driver competence and how we maintain our vehicle fleet. It has also led us to provide better guidance on journey planning and safe driving, and to enforce rules on alcohol and

drug use by employees.

Our aim is to reduce accidents involving staff and to meet our legal and moral obligations; but there are strong financial incentives for improving our approach. Mouchel's fleet comprises more than a 1,000 vehicles. Accidents and damage result in a direct cost to the business and upward pressure on insurance premiums; so the business case for safer driving is strong.

Any occupational road-risk strategy must assess driver competence. To understand the level of risk to which our drivers are exposing themselves and others we need to know more about their travel patterns, their understanding of the *Highway Code*, their hazard perception and attitude towards driving. So now all employees who drive as part of their role are required to undertake an online risk-assessment, developed by DrivingMonitor. Higher-risk employees are provided with further training, either online, in the classroom, or on the road, to address the deficiencies identified by the system.

We have also improved the way in which we manage and maintain our fleet. As an operator, we are responsible for ensuring the roadworthiness of our vehicles. We have always followed procedures to ensure that regular checks for faults, wear-and-tear, and damage are carried out by users of our leased vehicles, but have recently developed an online monitoring tool to control defect reporting, servicing and repairs. This not only makes it easier for employees to manage maintenance and repairs, but it gives us a clear audit trail of what is done and when.

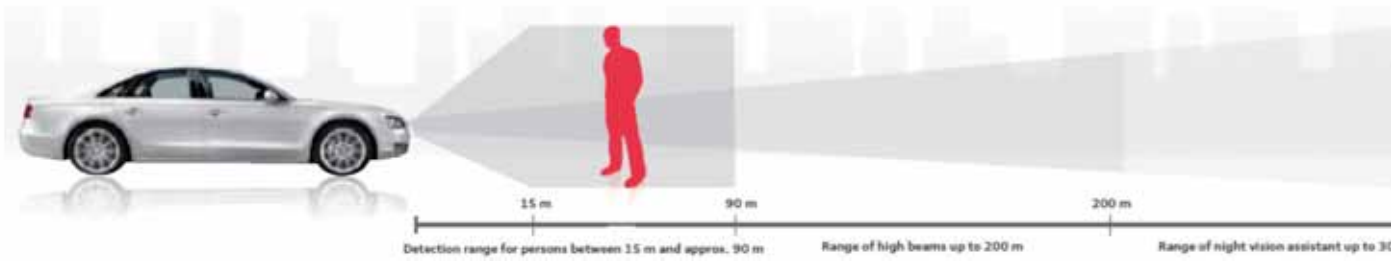
In addition to the 1,000 plus

vehicles leased by the company, many more vehicles used for company business are owned by employees. These are more difficult to manage effectively, but as an employer we are obliged to ensure that they are taxed and insured for business purposes and the DrivingMonitor system will verify these details.

Finally, we are helping staff to plan their journeys, to carry out vehicle checks, to obtain technical support, to comply with the law, and to drive safely and economically. Together with leasing provider, LexAutolease, we've produced a glove-box sized driver guide, which has been distributed to everyone who drives on company business. It has been designed with safety and road risk in mind and provides a summary of the essential facts needed by our employees.

Recognising and dealing with road risk as a distinct element in our approach to occupational health and safety makes sense from a legal, economic and moral standpoint. The business case for more proactive management is compelling and the systems included in our strategy can be paid for several times over in terms of reduced accident repair costs and insurance claims. Add to this the health and safety responsibilities that employers shoulder and it would be difficult to justify why any company whose employees need to travel would not adopt these measures. And, with nearly a quarter of a million casualties on our roads every year, it's an area where a very tangible impact can be made.

Ian Parker is Director of Health and Safety and Marketing at Mouchel



“ some collisions that today might be regarded as relatively minor simply wouldn't have been survivable even a decade ago ”

Top gear

Health and safety legislation, combined with better road design and traffic management, have helped to make Britain's roads safer. But what technologies are being introduced to help cut traffic accident rates?

Nathan Dennis provides some of the answers

Department for Transport (DfT) figures show that the number of people reported killed or seriously injured in 2008 was 40 per cent lower than figures ten years earlier, although an average of seven people are still killed every day. This reduction is despite a rise in overall traffic levels of around 15 per cent during the same period.

The fact that serious accidents have decreased, despite the significant increase in road traffic, is believed to be due to a combination of strategies and improvements in road design implemented by the DfT and to the motor industry, which has made enormous strides in ensuring that vehicles not only protect occupants and other road users in collisions but also help to prevent accidents happening in the first place.

'The safety of all road users is a high priority for every automotive manufacturer in the UK,' says Paul Everitt, Chief Executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. 'New technological developments ensure that improvements in occupant and pedestrian safety are constantly being made. Vehicle manufacturers work proactively to identify areas of vehicle design and construction that can be further improved to increase their level of protection. Technology and vehicle design has made a real difference to road safety, but ongoing success will depend on all parts of the industry working together to ensure that even safer vehicles are delivered.'

Traditionally, top-of-the-range models have been the first to feature cutting-edge developments in safety, but this is only the start; more often than not the technology filters down to the mainstream, helped by rapid advances in electronics, which make sophisticated and expensive systems more viable in mass produced models.

Features that help prevent accidents by assisting the driver to maintain control in an emergency – such as ABS, traction control systems, electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD) and electronic stability programme (ESP) – are now, along with airbags, commonplace in popular family models. In fact, ABS and at least one airbag are now standard in all new EU market cars.

A key factor in deciding the star rating of a car in the benchmark European New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) is whether or not ABS and ESP are included as standard equipment. ESP uses computerised sensors to detect when the car is at risk of skid and activates the brakes on individual wheels to bring it back into line. The fitment of ESP as standard will raise a car's NCAP rating typically by at least a star, incentivising more and more

manufacturers to equip their models with the technology.

A pioneer of the development of advanced active safety technology is Audi, which recognised the safety benefits of four-wheel drive in a passenger car and introduced it in the Audi quattro in 1980.

Audi is also at the forefront of night-vision systems. These have been available for several years on some of its premium models, but the new A8 offers an optional pedestrian detection system – a thermal imaging camera that detects heat sources up to 300m ahead of the car; 100m beyond the range of the main beam headlights.

Objects identified by their outlines as people are highlighted yellow by the system, and, if movement is detected, highlighted red as a potential hazard (and accompanied by an audible warning that helps the driver to take evasive action).

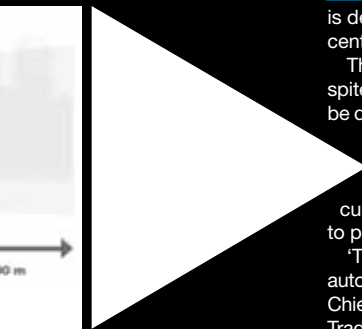
Another safety device increasingly being fitted as a standard in many models, including the A8, detects when a crash may be imminent and prepares the car by tightening the seatbelts, closing windows and sunroof, and activating hazard-warning lights. If specified, these systems can also adjust the backrest and headrest automatically to provide more protection for the seat occupant.

Drivers of the latest models can also opt for adaptive cruise control – a system that uses radar sensors to maintain a safe distance from a vehicle in front by automatically reducing throttle input or even braking if the vehicle stops suddenly. If a potential collision with the vehicle in front is detected, the system automatically applies the brakes to minimise impact and activates airbags. In the A8 a separate optional feature – 'side assist' – even allows hazards appearing in the driver's blind spot to be detected and monitored.

Ever-increasing traffic volumes and the rising potential for accidents on our crowded roads ensure that manufacturers are always striving to improve their vehicles' safety credentials. Some collisions that today might be regarded as relatively minor simply wouldn't have been survivable even a decade ago; testament to the advances in safety that have been made in vehicle design and technology.

Alongside improvements in road design, it is ongoing research and developments in microelectronic technology that hold the key to what can be achieved by manufacturers in future.

Nathan Dennis is Fleet and Aftersales Marketing Manager at Audi UK



Highway low risk

The recent announcement that the Department for Transport will have to make nearly £700m in spending cuts this financial year has brought into sharper focus the need for close management of risks associated with major highway schemes – from construction through to delivery and operation. **Kate Woods** reports

Mouchel is a leading developer of tools to help identify, analyse and manage risks associated with a scheme. These include project risk management tools such as the Risk Register and the Hazard Log Application developed for the Highways Agency (HA) for use on its managed motorway schemes (see box).

The Risk Register allows for efficient, streamlined identification and tracking of risks and opportunities over a whole project life cycle. Benefits of improved risk management include better allocation of funding and better mitigation measures to stop risks from coming to fruition.

The Risk Register ensures that all risks are captured in a way that's easily accessible and in a format that matches the Highways Agency's requirements. It uses risk scores to provide business managers with the means to analyse risks and prioritise remediation actions, plus a facility to record controls and audit checks in response to each risk.

'Most risk managers' time was taken on the administration side of the process rather than the important role of reviewing data. Now, instead of taking many hours, collation takes a matter of minutes,' says Ben Brody, Project Manager in Mouchel's Transport Operations and Technology team. 'Managers used to view the risk management process as a chore and a paperwork exercise. With the new user-friendly tool they can actually see the benefits and end results of more effective risk management.'

The Risk Register has been used successfully on schemes for the M3, M4 and M62.





Dukes of Hazard

Mouchel, along with supply chain delivery partner, Mott MacDonald, has developed an innovative system for hazard identification and management that could have an important impact on the future safety of our motorways.

The Managed Motorway Hazard Log Application (MMHLA) had been developed to support the roll-out of managed motorways – which use signals and variable message signs to manage traffic – across the UK. The MMHLA project is part of the HA's long-term commitment to safer roads. The aim is to enhance efficiency and consistency in how risks are identified, recorded and managed on schemes across the motorway network.

The MMHLA is provided in the form of a database. Hazards on the existing motorway are identified and given a risk score. The effects of the proposed road scheme are then analysed and the 'before' and 'after' scores compared. If required, mitigation measures are then put in place to manage the risk and to ensure safety objectives are achieved on the completed scheme. Once a scheme is completed, it is possible to go back and check the accuracy of the forecast produced by the MMHLA.

'The MMHLA provides an auditable trail of all the decisions relating to hazards, with all information available in one place,' said Ryszard Gorrell, Principal Safety Consultant at Mouchel. 'It provides full documentary evidence of what was decided, when and by whom, which was not easy to record or analyse in the past.'

The application has already been used successfully on schemes for the M3 and M4.

Further development of the system could enable comparisons to be made between different schemes at a national level and for the HA and others to incorporate lessons learned into future developments. 'Because the information is stored as a database, it will be possible to see how hazards have been managed successfully on other schemes across the country and to use this experience on current projects. It will make for better, more efficient working as it means designers will not have to come up with solutions to problems that have already been solved,' says Ryszard.

Kate Woods is Principal Consultant in Mouchel's Transport Operations and Technology team

“ managers used to view the risk management process as a chore and a paperwork exercise ”

We've got the power

The old saying, 'time is money', is never more true than in the world of international finance, where information technology and the breakdown of national boundaries have created an industry that never sleeps. So when the European HQ of global financial services firm, Morgan Stanley, required a multi-million pound electrical upgrade, a top priority was to minimise the risk of disruption to daily business activities, both in London and around the world. **Steve McCormack** talks to **Tim Wright** about the project

When it was completed in 1991, Morgan Stanley's 15-floor headquarters building in Canary Wharf represented the state-of-the-art in commercial development. However, after almost 20 years' exposure to the high-pressure, high-speed environment of international finance, with an almost daily 'churn' of personnel and services, the original electrical infrastructure had reached the end of its useful life.

'The function of the building has constantly changed over the years, and continues to do so, leading to many ad-hoc modifications and installations,' says Mouchel's Senior Project Manager, Tim Wright, who was seconded to Morgan Stanley to head the delivery team. 'These issues, coupled with the generally antiquated condition of the equipment and the power demands of modern technology, meant that a whole-sale replacement was needed.'

Power for the building is supplied from two 11,000V-substation supplies and is then 'stepped down' by transformers to provide standard three-phase voltage. Should both external supplies fail, two standby generators and one life-safety generator are on hand to carry the full-building load. Such multi-level resilience to power disruption is necessary because a power failure would not only affect all premises functions - such as lighting, communications and lifts - but could damage the IT systems handling any number of important financial transactions.

To ensure smooth delivery, the Electrical Infrastructure Upgrade programme was planned in meticulous detail by the professional team appointed by the client's corporate services department, led on this occasion by Tim. Working in partnership with the nominated equipment manufacturers, the team reviewed the existing equipment layout and created a more efficient solution to further increase system resilience.

More than 5,000 employees work at the site and the priority from the start of project planning in April 2008 was to complete the upgrade programme without having an impact on their daily lives. This was no mean feat as the proposed works were the equivalent of 'performing



open-heart surgery' on the building, 'while the patient was awake'.

Work was therefore scheduled for out of hours and weekends only to keep the building 'live' during business hours. Because the timing of activities was so critical, contingency time was built in to all planning to ensure that, even if things didn't go entirely to plan, it would be business as usual the next working day.

Communication was also a key to mitigating risk on the project. 'We had to coordinate our activities with the client's wider business as well as the IT department,' says Tim. 'Our client operates internationally in different time zones, with some business units relying on systems run out of the London office. We therefore had to gain global approval for all stages of the work. In addition, we had to collaborate closely with maintenance, security and catering suppliers to the building, as well as those occupying retail units on the site, all of whom would be affected.'

During the course of the works, new equipment was installed alongside existing infrastructure so that full testing could be carried out before switch-over. To achieve this, a working area was created in the engineering plant room on the plaza level.

As well as installing more than 8km of new armoured cable and

“ the proposed works were the equivalent of performing open-heart surgery on the building while the patient was awake ”

re-routing 4km of existing cables, the upgrade required hundreds of new cable joints to be installed, each of which took 8-10 hours to complete. To reduce disruption this activity was 'bundled' together and scheduled for weekend working.

A typical weekend programme would start at 7pm on Friday and be scheduled to finish by 2pm on Sunday. This would give the IT department time after office hours on Friday to power down the 5,000 PCs on site, running the necessary programmes to switch them off correctly, and then reverse the process in time for Monday morning.

The project team made every effort to reduce the number of power shutdowns during the contract and, by rationalising the workstream, it was possible to reduce these from the planned 28 to just 18.

Work on the Electrical Infrastructure Upgrade programme started on site in January 2009 and was completed the following November on time and to budget, with zero accidents on site. In all, more than 14,000 daytime construction hours and almost 19,000 night time hours, including work over 39 weekends, were required to complete the undertaking.

This was the latest project in a programme of work managed by

Mouchel for Morgan Stanley over the past four years. This multi-million pound programme of works has included the refurbishment of office floors, client facilities and the construction of a major data centre. Repeated collaboration over this range of projects has encouraged the development of a close working relationship between client and consultant.

'The fact that the scheme was delivered smoothly, without any major problems, is attributed to meticulous planning and the success of the critical risk mitigation measures adopted by the delivery team. Throughout the contract period, the vast majority of people working in the building were not aware that these works were being undertaken which is testimony to how well the work was planned and executed,' said David Gooderham, Head of EMEA Project Management.

Steve McCormack is a freelance journalist

Tim Wright is Senior Project Manager in Mouchel's Management Consulting business

Grand plans

“ the onus is on developers to consult widely ”

The development and construction of large-scale infrastructure is recognised as being fundamental to the economy's revitalisation and can facilitate the country's

transition to a low-carbon society. Effective planning of major schemes and the process of obtaining planning approvals is crucial to such projects and an increased level of importance is placed on it. So much so, in fact, that new legislation under the *Planning Act 2008* has recently come into effect that aims to make the process faster and fairer by pre-approving certain aspects of large-scale projects. A new body called the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) was formed in October 2009, replacing eight previous approval organisations, and began accepting planning submissions for key energy and transport projects earlier this year.

The new legislation will only apply to schemes above a minimum size. These qualifying projects will be classed as nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs).

Schemes below the minimum-size threshold will continue to be dealt with by planning authorities and other consent regimes.

Roger Prescott, Principal Planner for Mouchel's Town and Country Planning Team, explains: 'There are different interpretations as to what is meant by "large". Planning applica-

Large-scale projects seem to take an even longer time to get off the ground. However, new laws seek to streamline the planning process for some major projects and will shorten the time it takes. **Hywel Curtis** talks to **Roger Prescott** about which schemes qualify and what difference this makes

tions for housing, for example, are regarded as "major" if there are more than ten units.'

The current definitions of NSIPs, Roger points out, 'are a little unclear and inconsistent, and the process may take some time to settle down; but we can help colleagues and clients interpret the system.'

As Roger explains, 'many people think schemes that require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) must be large, but the requirement for EIA depends on both size and potential impact.'

So what does this mean for qualifying projects? NSIPs will be subject to an approval process in which the scheme's national economic benefit is compared to its local impact. The system aims to promote a more focused discussion on the project's impact at the community level, where specific environmental risks can be assessed and managed effectively.

Under the Act, the onus is now on developers to consult widely and to demonstrate how they have modified proposals in the light of comments received. This is not going to be a straightforward process; IPC guidelines clearly demand that such consultation takes place alongside a professional partner and insists on the highest standard of applications. 'If the report is considered inadequate, the IPC won't deal with the application,' says Roger. With such a strict submission process and the requirement for widespread local stakeholder consultation, he states that the best course of action is clear: 'early discussion with planning departments as it is likely to build trust and



'Another one and it would be a major planning application'

ease the application process.'

Despite some planning application areas being significantly streamlined, the management of environmental impact is still vitally important and Roger states that 'EIA will remain a key aspect of applications to the IPC.'

'Planning has come of age: it's no longer a tedious hurdle to overcome, and can contribute to a sustainable future for us all. New jobs, new houses, new leisure facilities, new schools and an attractive and diverse environment depend on us working together.'

Hywel Curtis is a freelance writer

Roger Prescott is Principal Planner for Mouchel's Town and Country Planning Team





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“ by involving environmental specialists early in a project, the likelihood and significance of encountering features such as undiscovered Roman archaeology or a roosting habitat for bats later down the line can be managed out ”





Planning to protect

Following the introduction of environmental impact assessment (EIA) in 1999, development projects must now ensure that their impact on the environment is acceptable. **Pete Whipp** explains how a risk-based approach to environmental assessment can help to ensure that project costs and quality are effectively managed

Project managers are trained to manage risks so that there is minimal impact to project programmes, quality and cost. This is often easier said than done. The consequences of not managing these risks effectively can threaten project delivery or expose developers to prosecution or adverse publicity.

Some technical environmental disciplines have been using a risk-based strategy for predicting impacts and effects for many years, often directed by legislation or policy, for example in the contaminated land and flood risk sectors. Both are characterised by potentially large costs if the impacts are not adequately identified and both have a direct link to human health or safety. Now, the use of a risk-based approach for other environmental disciplines is becoming more commonplace as the potential costs of environmental damage and remediation are increasing as the Environmental Liabilities Directive begins to bite.

Project managers commonly commission environmental specialists at the end of the planning process when legislation requires their input to secure legal consents and permits. This approach of seeking environmental input after site selection exposes the project to increased environmental risk, which can lead to refusal of planning permission, delays to programme, increased costs, and damage to reputation.

By contrast, the inclusion of environmental specialists early in the decision-making process helps to reduce this risk and to ensure that future impacts are avoided completely or, at the very least, mitigated. For example, the likelihood and significance of encountering features such as undiscovered Roman archaeology or a roosting habitat for bats later down the line can be managed out.

This approach doesn't always require increased upfront costs. There are numerous sources of publicly available data that can help with the early identification of environmental features and establish how much of a risk they pose to a project. Innovative survey methods, such as use of camera traps for ecology and geophysical survey for identifying

undiscovered archaeology, and the use of geographic information systems to manage and interrogate data in reviewing site options allow cost-effective screening of large study areas for major development projects.

Even if the design of a scheme has been fixed, a risk-based approach can still be used to manage environmental impacts. By assessing the probability of discovering statutory protected features such as endangered species or archaeological artefacts at the project site, decisions can be made on the best construction methods and techniques to reduce disturbance. The ability to change construction methods to reduce the impact to local people and wildlife might also be useful to win over local consultees if a project is contentious.

Mouchel has recently used this approach on schemes as diverse as site selection evaluations for the Ministry of Defence, the routing of a gas pressure reduction installation for National Grid and the management of water assets for Southern Water. In all of these examples, the environment team was engaged early, enabling it to advise on scheme location and design and reducing the risk of encountering environmental impacts later down the line.

Mouchel has recently developed a collaborative relationship with Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Conferences to offer its members formal training in managing environmental risk in the planning process. The master classes – which include a session on ecology in the planning process and heritage and archaeology in development – supplement the successful EIA master class already offered by RTPI Conferences and have received excellent feedback.

Pete Whipp is Environmental Consultant in Mouchel's Engineering and Environment team

More information on the RTPI Masterclass series can be found at www.rtpiconferences.co.uk.

Silo mentality

When Mouchel engineers designed their gigantic grain silos back in the 1890s, little did they know that they were creating a blueprint for one of Britain's foremost art galleries of the future. **Paul Murrell** looks back at the history of the Baltic Centre, from flat caps to not-so-flat canvasses



Baltic Centre

In 1952, the American avant-garde musician and artist John Cage composed a score to be played by any instrument entitled 4'33". It instructs the performer (or performers) not to play for the duration of the piece's three movements so that the silence, or more specifically, the background and ephemeral noise of the location, become the focus of the audience and in effect 'the music'.

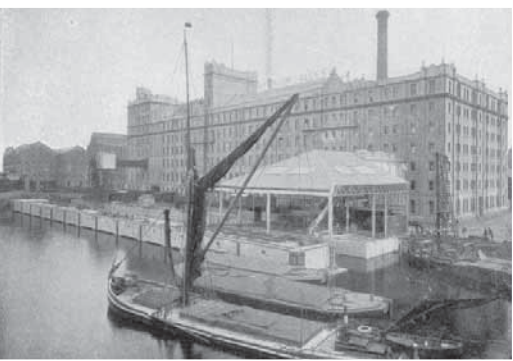
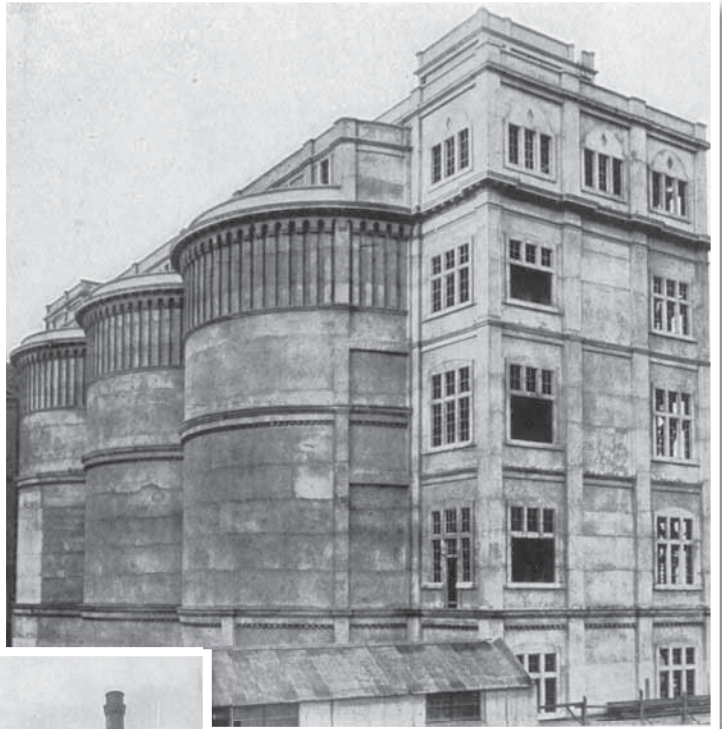
In 2010, up until mid-September, the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, located on the banks of the River Tyne in Gateshead 'brings together the work of eight contemporary artists who use the writings and scores of Cage as a source of inspiration'. The exhibition houses 'a scaled version of the moon comprising 165 sheets of paper', 'an aerial station of weathered instruments' and 'a bell that moves, but that we can no longer hear'.

Whatever your thoughts on conceptual art, inspiration and innova-

tion are two things we do quite well at Mouchel, so it's fitting that 'Cage Mix: Sculpture and Sound' exhibition is taking place in a building that was originally a silo for flour and animal feed owned by the Baltic Flour Mills – and engineered by us.

Back in the late 1890s, Mouchel was commissioned to produce silo designs for Swansea-based millers and corn merchants Weaver's Mill. Those designs laid the foundations for an expertise in grain milling and storage that would remain a speciality of the firm for the next 100 years.

Simply put, grain silos are structures created to store materials in bulk and the Weaver's Mill building was the first multi-storey reinforced concrete version of such a structure in Europe. Over a century it became something of a landmark; not least because the mill survived attacks by the Luftwaffe during three nights of bombing on Swansea



Millenium Flour Mills at Victoria Docks

Flour Mill and Granary at Swansea

Circular silos at Silvertown Flour Mills

in 1941, which makes it somewhat ironic to learn that it was demolished to make way for a Sainsbury's in 1984.

The Gateshead mill (now Baltic Centre) stands 42m high, is 24m wide and 52m long, and is one of many to benefit from the expertise that came out of the construction of the Swansea 'blueprint'. It served as a model for other mills built as part of a reconstruction programme after World War II.

Mouchel worked with Hull-based architect Gelder and Kitchen on designs for the silo in the 1950s and it acted as a dual-purpose factory until its closure in 1982.

The images accompanying this piece are from the two editions of *Hennebique Ferro-Concrete: Theory and Practice 'A Handbook for Engineers and Architects'* (first published in 1909) in which there are countless examples of granary buildings and grain warehouses that Mouchel was responsible for, including the Millennium Flour Mills at Victoria Docks in London and further examples in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Ireland – proving that demand for reinforced concrete warehouses was UK-wide.

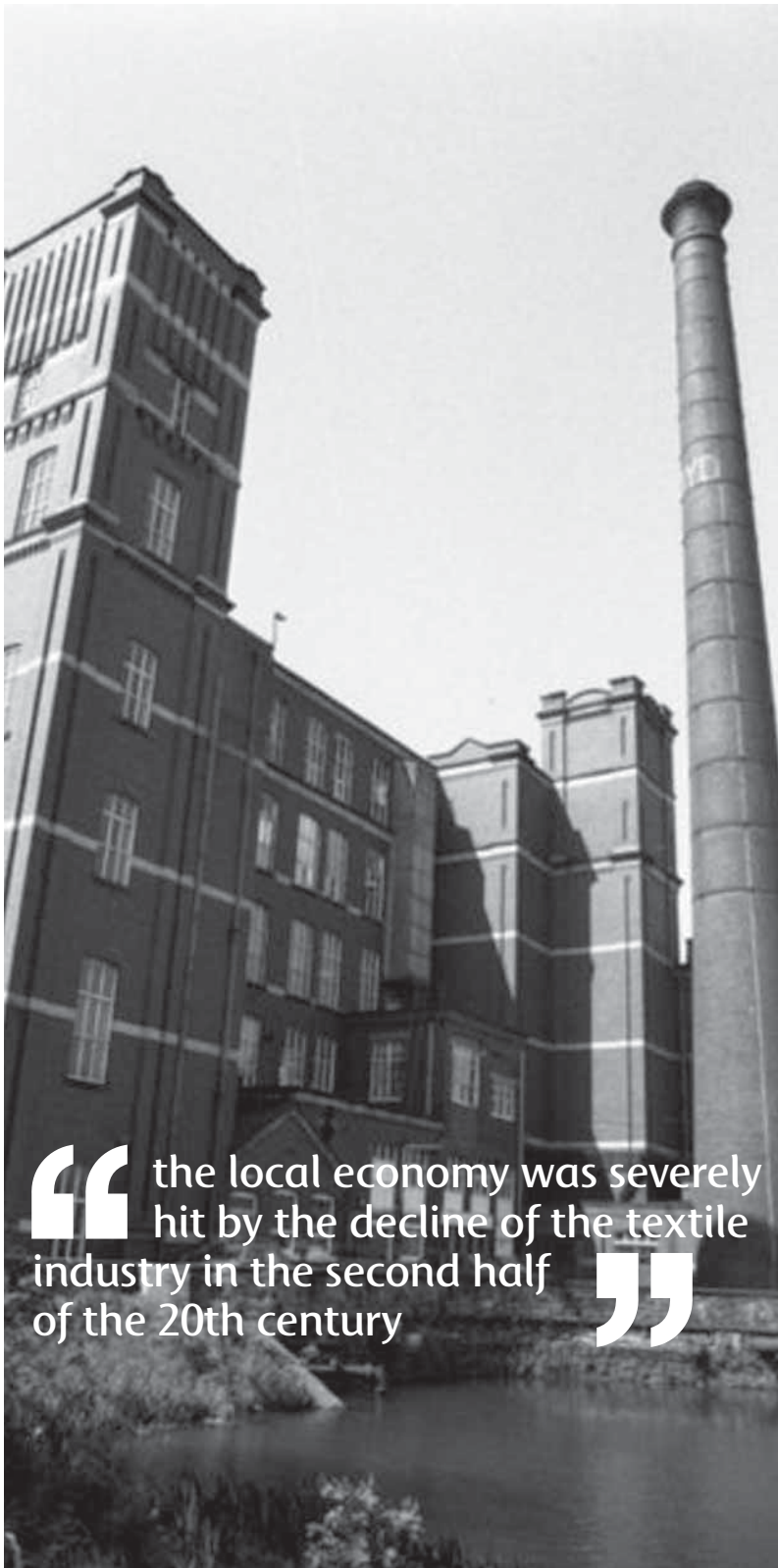
Today, there seems to be something that inexplicably 'works' when you marry one of these gigantic industrial structures, such as a derelict power station (TATE Modern) or disused silo (Baltic Centre), with modern art. It's as if the cold, faceless structures lend themselves more easily to the freewheeling colours and ideas contained within them.

It does raise a smile, though, to think of these marvellous mills in their working heyday, full of men in flat caps going ten to the dozen, faces covered in grain and flour; then to think of the buildings in their current form, full of designer-clad art buffs admiring weathered instruments hanging from bits of string.

Paul Murrell is Publications Advisor at Mouchel

Further details on The BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and the Cage Mix: Sculpture and Sound exhibition can be found at www.balticmill.com

Special thanks to David Thompson



“ the local economy was severely hit by the decline of the textile industry in the second half of the 20th century ”

Hackney case study

Paula, 39, only moved to Hackney at the end of last year, but thanks to the support of the Ways into Work team she is now back in full-time work following a period of unemployment. A chance visit to the local council office introduced Paula to the range of support and training available and she followed her interest in IT by enrolling on a 12-week course. Meanwhile, she continued to apply for administration jobs via numerous employment websites with the full support of her outreach worker, Jacqui.

‘Jacqui was only a phone call away, providing encouragement, advice and practical and moral support while I was applying for jobs. In particular, she helped me to prepare a very professional CV, which I then uploaded to the sites where I was registered.’

The strategy paid off and Paula is now providing six months’ maternity cover as an administration assistant in a West End company. She is hopeful that the role may be made permanent, but she is also confident that, armed with her new IT skills, she will be in a much better position when it comes to seeking new jobs or applying for more challenging roles in the future.

Oldham case study

Gemma, 25, left school at 14 but now, she is working hard to catch up on the education she missed, helped by Unity Partnership. She first came into contact with the organisation when her college found her two weeks’ work experience there in February 2009. At the time, Gemma was taking a Business and Administration NVQ Level 2 course and, because of the good relationships she built up at Unity, she was allowed to continue with the organisation for two mornings a week until June, with the experience counting towards her course.

She is now half way through a one-year NVQ that will give her Levels 2 and 3 in Business and Finance and then plans to take a Level 4 course in Accountancy before seeking a job that will allow her to use her qualifications. However, Gemma is clear that her experience with Unity made a huge contribution to her progress.

‘I left school at an early age and felt that I was missing key skills and that the working environment was a scary place. By learning the ropes at Unity, I gained a great deal of confidence. Because I had never been in that environment before it really helped when the staff encouraged me to attempt challenging tasks and I realised “I can do this!”’

Back to work

Long-term partnerships between private organisations and local authorities are becoming a fact of everyday life, with many of the services traditionally provided by local councils now being outsourced. But, while we may be used to the idea of services such as highways and housing being delivered in this way, we may be less aware that private-sector expertise is being focused on social services. Mouchel, through two innovative partnership schemes in Oldham and Hackney, is at the forefront of this trend

In Oldham, Unity Partnership is a joint venture between the Metropolitan Borough Council and Mouchel. The borough's fortunes were founded during the Industrial Revolution, and the local economy was severely hit by the decline of the textile industry in the second half of the 20th century. As a result, it suffers from high levels of unemployment, a situation that the Council is working hard to rectify.

As part of its engagement in Oldham, Unity is supporting the Council's community cohesion objectives. This has involved providing local residents with work experience, basic interview skills training and access to an apprenticeship programme. In addition, a new mentoring scheme provides selected young people with an insight into the working environment and direct access to a working professional who can encourage and help them.

Under the scheme, Unity employees volunteer their time to mentor a young person over a number of months. The pilot, launched in April, comprised 16 mentors and around 20 young people. The aim is to give local young people the opportunities they may have missed. It provides an insight into the working environment to broaden individual's horizons. 'It's like having a big brother or sister with a bit of experience who can raise their expectations and help them to achieve their dreams,' says Community Liaison Officer David Knight, who is coordinating the programme.

Initially, the pilot will target the Glodwick area, focusing on individuals in 'transitional periods' of their lives, such as post-GCSE or post-college. Thus the age target will be 16-25, although Unity is keen to include other adult groups as the programme is rolled out across the borough.

In London, Mouchel provides broader social services through its involvement with Hackney Homes; it manages 10,000 properties in the Homerton and De Beauvoir Queensbridge neighbourhoods. Hackney has one of the lowest employment rates in the UK, with a high percentage of the working age population on long-term benefits. More than a third of Hackney's unemployed have never worked.

Recognising that almost half the 94,000 households in Hackney are within the social-rented sector, the Council has implemented a local training and employment service to help unemployed residents into work.

'Ways into Work' takes a different approach to tackling unemployment by working with housing providers such as Mouchel to identify residents who would benefit from help in finding a job and to use their trusted status to disseminate information. It's aimed at everyone in social housing aged between 16 and 59 who is unemployed or economically inactive and is funded by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

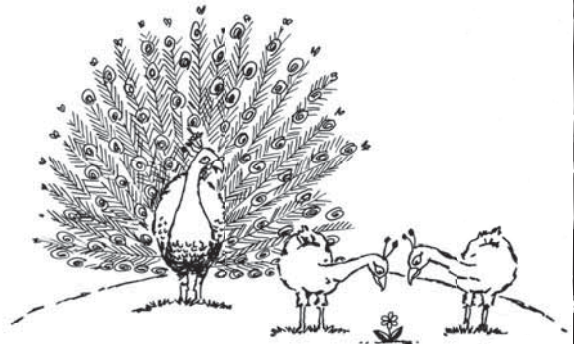
Additionally, the programme uses housing services to overcome barriers to employment, such as helping with housing benefit and council tax benefit claims for residents and liaising with rent arrears departments to help remove the risk of them becoming homeless. It also offers extra help with childcare costs, CV writing, interview techniques, acquiring skills and experience, and travel costs. Once in a job, residents are offered ongoing support to ensure their new role goes smoothly.

'Because of the local intelligence built up through the housing man-

agement activities, it was recognised that Mouchel would be well placed to signpost those who needed support and direct the outreach teams in a targeted fashion,' says Mouchel's Neighbourhood Manager Nii-Amon Nikoi. 'We are using sub-consultancy A4e to provide out-reach teams to target and refer individuals to appropriate employment programmes and training. It works as part of the Mouchel team, embedded in our offices across the borough.'

Mouchel has engaged with more than 200 people in the first six months of the programme and has referred more than half of these either to job brokerage firms or for training. By the end of the programme in March 2011, 1,000 residents will have been engaged and 500 referred for jobs or training.

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Manc of the match

Trevor Hunt splits his week between the EnterpriseMouchel Manchester office and various windswept sports grounds – co-presenting the most popular rugby league radio show in the country. **Paul Murrell** finds out if there's any connection between winning bids and wingers

With 30 years' experience working in the public and private sector with both local authority and central government, there can't be much in highway management that Trevor Hunt hasn't seen. And yet, if you were to cut him with a knife, I suspect you'd find he bleeds rugby league – his other interest and one that has seen him travel to South Africa, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, Australia and New Zealand; and landed him a broadcasting job with the BBC.

Enjoying a rare day off, Trevor tells me about his day-to-day work. 'I'm a bid and business development manager and it can be very demanding. I usually start at about 7.30am in the morning and might not stop until 10pm at night – sometimes midnight when working on a bid.'

I suggest that the seemingly non-stop working hours probably aren't as bad if you go on to be successful with your bid, and Trevor laughs, 'No, you don't mind losing sleep as long as you win the work!'

But it's rugby league – or 'Super League' as it's known – that we're talking about today. Trevor once played at amateur level both internationally and for his local team, Leigh Miners ('right in the heart of rugby league world'), and was often interviewed about aspects of his playing career on the radio. In April 1986, he attended the funeral of Ray Dennett, the presenter he had spoken to over the airwaves many times before – and was met with a slight amount of uncertainty.

'I was speaking to people at the funeral and they were saying, "What are we going to do now? We've nobody to cover Warrington against Dewsbury on Sunday." So I said, "Well I'll give you a lift if you want," and it went from there.'

Trevor began phoning in match reports direct from the stands, 'It was just a case of talking down the phone really. They wanted 30-40 second inputs and I didn't even

have a stopwatch on my first go. I used to tell them what had happened then they'd say, "Finish on the score", so I'd finish on the score and then the phone would go dead and they'd ring me back about 15 minutes later to see what else had gone on.'

The role led to Trevor's current schedule of 80-minute commentaries two to three times every weekend and his BBC Radio Manchester show *Rugby League Extra*, which he co-presents with stalwart of the Manchester sports scene Jack Dearden.

Trevor explains, 'We've had anybody and everybody on the show over the years – all-time greats such as Alex Murphy or Ellery Hanley (who recently took part in ITV's *Dancing on Ice*), and modern-day stars such as Great Britain captain Jamie Peacock and Wigan's 19-year-old stand-off Sam Tomkins. We average around 230,000 listeners every Thursday night. There's not much to write for the show, it's all pretty much ad-libbed. We know who the guests are, we know what they've done and we know what the fixtures are, so off we go.'

For those not familiar with the differences between rugby union and rugby league, I ask Trevor to clarify, 'Rugby union has two more players – 15-a-side as opposed to rugby league's 13 – and it has line-outs and lots of rolling mauls. Rugby league keeps the ball alive much more during the game and there's less kicking in it.'

Does he ever find himself commentating along with the television I wonder? 'You don't commentate, but you do listen to what the broadcaster is saying with a more critical ear. Having said that, I went to watch Manchester United with some clients and afterwards one of them made a crack and said, "Oh it was great listening to Trevor during the game – it was almost like being there!" So obviously commentating is something I do now without realising it.'

Surely it's tough being so relentlessly busy? I ask whether or not Trevor gets much time to sit at home with his feet up and watch a game. 'Yeah funnily enough I do! The wife is fully supportive, thankfully. Like many people I'm into sport generally. I go to the gym and I've participated in a number of fitness-based trials to raise money for the Rugby Football League Benevolent Fund and injured rugby players. I seem to thrive on it all. I'm a very energetic person.'





“ we know who the guests are, we know what they’ve done and we know what the fixtures are, so off we go ”

But there is a negative side, says Trevor, ‘It can be a bit of a bind when you’ve done a huge semi-final game on Saturday, with an exciting packed house, then you’ve got to troop off somewhere with a small crowd and do a commentary with the same enthusiasm for a game that’s as dead and flat as can be.’

Far from his BBC duties being a hindrance to his business development work, Trevor says they complement it quite well, ‘Radio work enhances my presentation, communication, and team-building skills. It’s a different pressure and requires living off your wits, but it all helps with the different work situations that I find myself in - whether I’m managing a contract or project or working on site, the fact that I can see when something’s not quite right (and don’t mind saying so), helps. Some people might keep their mouths shut.’

Those of you who want to hear more from Trevor and his mouth, and

aren’t able to tune into BBC Manchester, can hear his Thursday night 6-8pm show online via iPlayer. ‘We played an April Fool prank this year and announced that the Rugby Football League was going to put a chip into all the balls so that they would set off a bell when passing between the posts to signal a goal. We had all sorts of people arguing that it was a waste of money or that it was a good idea, until about five minutes from the end when somebody twigged and sent an email saying that it was obviously a load of rubbish.’ Thankfully, the same can’t be said for the show itself.

*Paul Murrell is Publications Advisor at Mouchel
Trevor Hunt is a Bid and Business Development Manager at EnterpriseMouchel*

Aiming for zero

Last year the Health and Safety Executive reported around 50 deaths among those maintaining and operating the motorway network. Most of these were due to workers being struck by vehicles and other moving objects. **Simon Ashall** talks to **Phil Atkinson** about the challenges that he and other network operations managers face in raising safety levels

What risks do organisations and their workforces face in highways network operations?

With operations taking place on both motorway and trunk road networks – whether it be inspections, supervision or construction activities – teams are exposed to high-speed traffic on a daily basis. Safety risks vary, from being struck by unaware drivers to injuries from machinery and falling objects.

How do they seek to identify and ameliorate these risks?

Supervisors and managers have a responsibility to analyse risks and ensure that there is correct planning surrounding them. We know how important a part of any contract this process is and do everything to limit risks of injury to our teams. As designers, we have a responsibility to consider the risks during construction and subsequent maintenance of an asset.

Risks are identified throughout the life of a project from initial concept through to the maintenance and even onwards into optimisation. Control measures are enhanced at each stage. Often these measures are found in areas that are not immediately obvious; for example in Highways Agency Area 3, a new system for coning has been trialled. By adjusting the position of cones used as a taper when carrying out motorway works, we can cut down the number used from 50 to 30 thereby reducing exposure to traffic by those putting out the cones.

What role do you think management has in the control of risk?

Management has a role in communicating with, and training, staff. ‘Behavioural safety’ is an important concept for us and we take every opportunity to integrate this into our business. The Area 3 Training Plan, for example, specifies an annual health and safety update for all staff working on the commission. The first of these was held in April 2010 and the theme ‘Aiming for Zero’ focused not just on processes and regulations, but on a cultural change so that all teams work together towards a shared goal: no harm to any network staff.

How do you think attitudes to risk in highways have changed?

The past two decades have seen a considerable advance in health

and safety legislation and this has had an impact on the way that businesses work. High-visibility clothing, improved signage and coning arrangements, compulsory wearing of personal protective equipment, the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations for managing risk at design stage have all had a positive effect in reducing accident figures.

Does managing risk affect the way that we do business? How do our clients prioritise risk management?

Managing risk is taken very seriously within the Highways industry, not just by operators and contractors, but by clients too. All expect to see properly formulated plans to control the risks both to workforces and road users – safety is as important as delivery.

Proactive risk management improves the way we conduct business by ensuring that potential problems are planned for in advance, that mitigation strategies are put in place and that the costs of these are budgeted for. Clients, like contractors, appear to be moving in the same direction in seeing the benefits that proactive risk management can bring.

Can you foresee any challenges that risk management will pose to network operations in the future?

In our industry, we are exposed to risks on a daily basis and it is important to reduce these to the lowest practicable level. To do this, we need to understand how to manage risk effectively. It is not just a question of avoiding risk, for example the best way to avoid risks to our staff on a high-speed network is to close the motorway, but this requires diverting frustrated motorists onto local roads, where we may expose more pedestrians to risk of injury. We need to weigh up all the risks and decide on the safest and most practical option overall.

Phil Atkinson is Deputy Managing Director for Network Operations in Mouchel's Highways division

Simon Ashall is Press Officer (Highways and Transportation)



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important as
delivery ”

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