

Gordon Masterton's address to CIC Council as incoming Chairman
10th June 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, and fellow professionals,

I am honoured to take up the position as Chair of the CIC, and to acknowledge the immense debt we owe to all of our previous Chairmen. At this time, it's particularly appropriate to mention the huge contribution made by my predecessor, Keith Clarke, who has steered the CIC through some challenging times over the past two years, not least as Keith's period in office included the biggest economic downturn that the world has seen for many many years. It's greatly to the credit of CIC, that it has a) survived and b) strengthened its influence with government and therefore its ability to help the country recover as quickly as possible.

Keith was of course on the interview panel for the appointment of Paul Morrell as Chief Construction Adviser, and this appointment was a huge success for the construction industry. For the first time we have a professional from the construction industry advising government at a high level, and influencing the direction of policy relating to the industry. **Which is a cue for my first commitment as chairman, to support Paul Morrell to the hilt in cementing the importance of that post such that it becomes a permanent feature.** We will do that, collectively, if we can help ensure that the post has impact and gives demonstrable value to government. It's a great opportunity, but the construction industry must help Paul carry a collective intellectual weight of argument that adds to the quality and impact of what he can produce. The first significant deliverable is the output from the Innovation and Growth Team, and it is immensely gratifying that the importance of this work is recognised by members of CIC who are providing significant support already. Thank you for what you have already done, and thank you in advance, for what you will be doing in the future! It's hugely important on two counts – firstly because the work itself is urgently required as a game-changer in understanding how the construction industry can best take advantage of the low carbon economy and demonstrate its relevance and creativity; secondly, because it is the first opportunity for the role of the Chief Construction Adviser to be attached to a significant advisory report. With the change in administration it is tactically even more important to make this report a resounding success.

As outgoing chair of CIC's Health and Safety Committee, and as chair of the Standing Committee on Structural Safety, it should be no surprise to you if I also mention another important role for the CIC – representing the collective voice of professionals in our drive towards an ever-safer industry. I'm delighted to be handing over to a real safety enthusiast in Peter Caplehorn, and this was not just a role handed on by invitation. Such has been the levels of enthusiasm in the Health and Safety Committee over the past few years that we had to have an election for the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair, and Peter is therefore *your* choice as chair, so please support him in this. I'm also pleased to say that other representative roles are required and so unsuccessful candidates have been able to re-direct their enthusiasm into

playing other important roles. But in these hugely difficult financial times, let's not take our eye off the ball with safety. We've been steadily improving over the years but we still kill too many people in our industry, and, as Rita Donaghy said in her Report, "One Death is Too Many". Until we can be confident that we have the right management structures and focus and unshakeable belief that we can design and construct ANYTHING without fatalities or indeed injuries, then we cannot rest. We still have work to do. This is one area where collectively, through the CIC Health and Safety committee, you can deliver more than the sum of your parts. One example has been the initiative to improve the quality of the test for the Professional's CSCS Card, with the new card being launched immediately after our last Council meeting. The government's response to the Donaghy Report referred specifically to the work of CIC in influencing the content of educational courses in risk and safety awareness and that should be taken as an endorsement of the value of what we are doing. But that of course was the previous administration so we have to earn our spurs yet again, and I'm confident that we have the ability to do that. And in an era where government is looking with the hunger of a zealous surgeon at the opportunities for cuts, we have an opportunity to demonstrate where the industry-funded professional institutions, working collectively as CIC, can add huge value to their no doubt soon-to-be diminished public sector capability. But we have to earn it through respect for the quality of our advice when it's sought. I believe that construction safety as it is influenced by design and project management is an area where already we have the capacity to fulfil that role with excellence. **So that's my second commitment as Chairman, to use my position to be a continuing advocate for safety and support the work of the Health and Safety Committee.**

In a climate where the government is wielding the metaphorical scalpel (well, let us hope it IS a scalpel and not a butcher's knife), the voice of reason becomes even more important. And it seems increasingly likely that we are entering a period when construction could pay a heavy price in the government's search for short term fiscal economies. When the global economy nose-dived, private sector investment in construction projects plummeted. But the industry received significant relief from the government's fiscal stimulus policy. Publicly funded projects were brought forward, and, although there were many redundancies, there was a safety net that saved a great many. The safety net is about to be removed. And that means we are in a higher risk environment, with less public expenditure and more competition across sectors for a share of a smaller cake.

But that is also an opportunity for CIC to represent the industry, with your support, as fundamentally a wealth creator, not a sink for government money to keep us all employed doing things we like to do. This will not be a time for special pleading. It will be a time for reasoned arguments that have clear impact and that, with laser-focus, present a clear and convincing case that construction creates wealth and stimulates economic activity. And this country needs economic growth like never before. It is growth that will increase tax revenues, it is growth that will reduce wasteful unemployment; it is growth that will speed the recovery. We need to play our part in convincing government

that investment in creative and innovative projects is a better investment than other potential sources for public money. We need to play our part in convincing private sector funders, who ideally should also be playing an increasing role in plugging the project funding gaps, that the construction industry is a good place to invest, and can deliver on time on budget. That needs to be earned too. And in the perception of many, including government, we're not there yet. We can't ignore the perception that it costs more to deliver construction projects in the UK than anywhere else and we need to take these issues on, and either prove that the assertions are wrong, or acknowledge that we've got work to do. We need to be seen, not as an old industry with dead ideas, but as a vibrant industry willing to be at the cutting edge of design for the low carbon economy. We need to seize that opportunity. As professionals in the industry, we carry a huge amount of the intellectual rigour and weight that the industry needs to change its perception. We will be better placed to do that collectively as CIC than individually as member organisations. **And this is my third commitment as Chairman - to be an advocate for the industry that I love and admire and to work with Graham Watts and his team to do what we can to represent the professionalism and quality of the construction industry in the best possible light through the, (possibly), darker times ahead.**

Ladies and gentlemen, whilst we might be fearful of the future, I think we are entering a period when we do have many opportunities, but they will be hard-earned and without the comfort of a public sector safety net. We will probably need to learn new skills very quickly to stay on the stage. But we need to hold on to the belief that we CAN influence our own destiny, and that the construction industry is at the heart of the recovery, and isn't left lying on the sidelines.

Someone once said in February 2009, "At this defining moment in history, the origin of our future is at stake. But I truly believe that British science can answer the call - and with it secure our economic future for generations to come." I'd like to be able to add that the British Construction Industry has ALSO answered the call and will also be part of securing the economic future for generations to come.

The quote, by the way, was from Gordon Brown delivering the Romanes Lecture in Oxford in February 2009. How quickly we forget!

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.