

# 2021'S CONSTRUCTION CONTENT *Calendar*

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**JANUARY**

## Proptech and the 'office 2.0'

'Smart building' technology is revolutionising how buildings are designed, delivered and operated with client efficiency requirements changing the playing field. On top of this, 2020 has proved that many aspects of business can be carried out remotely. Steve Wignall is MD at Imtech Engineering Services, the second largest M&E specialist in the UK. He told Barbour ABI in November there is evidence in London that conventional projects with big open plan offices, rows of desks and cellular offices are already being redesigned. "There seems to be a greater proportion of meeting rooms and collaboration space; almost redefining the purpose of an office away from a place where lots of people sit at desks," he said. "Maybe the offices of the future will be designed very differently - not where lots of people sit nine to five, but more collaboration and meeting facilities." Accordingly, this month's focus aims to gather views from those designing and delivering commercial projects to get the inside track on how the office market is being disrupted.

**FEBRUARY**

## Mental health and wellbeing

A topic swept under the carpet until recent times, construction is now beginning to face its responsibilities in this area and is starting to open up and talk about how it should be looking after its workforce. With workers having faced additional difficulties and tensions in the Covid pandemic on top of the range of routine ones, in February we will examine best practice and look at what companies have been doing to help keep employees stay mentally fit and healthy.

**MARCH**

## Onsite innovation

This is an industry that must overcome challenges on a daily basis. With necessity being the mother of invention, many solutions see the employment of new methods and techniques, or equipment and materials being used in new and interesting ways. Yet much of this isn't formally captured and disseminated across the business and either becomes localised knowledge, or is lost altogether. Indeed, recent HMRC data shows that only around 1% of SMEs in UK construction take advantage of the government's R&D tax credits scheme that can either reduce corporation tax liability or provide a cash injection. To throw some light on real coalface innovation, we will uncover some of the brilliant solutions that the sector produces.

**APRIL**

## Training and recruitment

The long lamented industry skills gap doesn't look like closing anytime soon, not least with the UK contending with an uncertain post-EU future that is impacting the availability of skilled labour, particularly in the south east. None-the-less the industry expends significant energy and resource to attract and retain people, with both on and off the job training being fundamental to making the most of the available talent pool. In such an environment, April's content focus will examine some of these initiatives to uncover beacons of success and their hard-won lessons.

**MAY**

## Green technology

The climate crisis is demonstrating that green technology must become increasingly embedded within how populations live, work and travel. From decarbonising existing estates to improving energy efficiency in new build schemes to planning, designing and delivering low carbon public transport, much of the built world around us will be affected in one way or another. To look at what needs to happen if the UK is to hit its 2050 net zero carbon emissions target as well as where green technology is gaining momentum, this month's focus will take a sounding from industry experts who will play lead roles in master-planning and the design and redesign of our built environment.



JUNE

## Women in construction

While construction constantly grapples with a chronic skills gap, half of the UK population is broadly unengaged and untapped as a significant part of the solution. The problem becomes increasingly pronounced the further one looks up the seniority chain, with executive boards being the ultimate illustration of underrepresentation. But there are businesses tackling this issue head on, with some committing to challenging targets for gender parity and realising that for women to see construction as a career rather than just a job, there must be real programmes to help them advance. With this in mind, June's focus will provide the oxygen of publicity for those organisations that are blazing an inspirational trail for others to follow, and in so doing, are creating better and more profitable businesses.

JULY

## The Brexit effect: Products and materials

It's six months since the UK left the EU and as the nation enters H2 we consider the state of the industry in terms of supply chain reformation, product availability and how this has affected input costs. While there will inevitably be highs and lows, the aim will be to highlight both the pitfalls and the success stories to provide better visibility for businesses grappling with both an economy and a productive capacity in a state of flux.

AUGUST

## Renewable energy

With the progressive phasing out of fossil fuels, renewables are set to become increasingly important within the UK's energy mix. But while tried and tested generation through on and offshore wind make up about 50% of the UK's renewable generation, it still only currently amounts to around 10% of that energy mix. Yet serious coastal power in the shape of Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay has been rejected in its current form by the UK government. Meanwhile the nation's energy grid requires significant investment. Bearing all this in mind, our renewable energy focus will assess likely scenarios for green energy and what this might mean for the designers, constructors and maintainers of the UK's generation infrastructure.

SEPTEMBER

## Health and safety

With annual construction deaths still stubbornly remaining far too high at around 40 per year, not to mention the many serious injuries, this focus will be on new initiatives that are set to make a difference by protecting operatives. These may include innovative equipment, digital products and new training initiatives that change how we perceive, plan around and tackle onsite risk.

OCTOBER

## Low carbon construction

Increasingly referred to as the most important issue in construction, the next few decades are likely to define the success of climate change mitigation and the industry has a major role to play. With high carbon emission during construction, poor embodied carbon credentials and inefficient buildings all being critical elements that the industry can directly influence, this month we will also consider the impact of new emissions constraints on construction, share success stories and look at what supply chains can really do to make a difference.

NOVEMBER

## Offsite and modular building

November 2017 saw the government announce a 'presumption in favour of offsite', with departments overseeing defence, education, health and social care, justice and transport expected to prefer bids incorporating it. But a schism has emerged within what constitutes offsite, how appropriate it is and in what way DfMA and modular strategies should proceed. Given this uncertainty, we will take a look at the playing field and take a sounding on current thinking, emerging methodologies and how these are liable to influence the sector.

DECEMBER

## Technology: Manufacturers

While digital construction is often the first conversation when it comes to modernising construction, manufacturers are making huge strides that are reshaping both how projects are delivered and how assets perform. This focus will reveal some of the most exciting new entrants in the fields of smart equipment, products and materials and take a look at how they may impact on asset design, delivery and operation to make for a more efficient industry and built environment.

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