

A strong industry voice that's really needed

ACE's new chairman, Mike Haigh, is targeting better industry integration, effective use of digital information and improving diversity and inclusion as his key priorities for his 12 months in office.

With more than 30 years' working in the infrastructure sector, Mott MacDonald managing director Mike Haigh has a wealth of knowledge that he is keen to apply in his new role as chair of the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE). Haigh has responsibility for Mott MacDonald's business throughout Europe and Africa and prior to that was regional managing director for the firm's Europe and Africa operations and before that the Middle East and South Asia. So he has significant global experience to call upon.

Working collaboratively

As befits someone who is keen to see the infrastructure sector work in a more joined up way, Haigh is a big advocate of the industry working more collaboratively. Previous roles as a member of the delivery boards for Anglian Water Special Projects, Severn Trent One Supply Chain and the Thames Water GBM (Galliford Try,

Biwater Treatment and Mott MacDonald) joint venture highlight his credentials as does being a director of Mott MacDonald Bentley, the multi-award-winning integrated joint-venture with contractor JN Bentley.

Giving something back

"I've been involved in the infrastructure industry for 35 years in lots of different capacities and for the past couple of years I've been on the board of ACE and chair of its large consultancy group and I've seen the benefits that ACE can bring to the broader industry," says Haigh. "I also feel that it's time to be giving something back and to be able to do that in the role of ACE chair is a very worthwhile thing," he says.

In a changing industry, business and political climate, what does he see as the key benefits of ACE? "The ability of a single organisation like ACE to understand the wide ranging issues

that face our industry, whether it be from the client side, from designers or from constructors or SMEs and that ability to understand the industry is quite unique," he says. "The voice that ACE has and its power in terms of lobbying is significant and something we need to make as much of as we possibly can. Advocacy and lobbying is important but it's also the fact that we can do this from such a broad base of understanding and knowledge," Haigh says.

But what about the challenges facing ACE and its members in what are bound to be uncertain times following the turbulence of the past 12 months? Haigh tackles the question head on and is typically optimistic in his reply. "I'm not sure that I can remember a time where we have faced such uncertainty – economic and political – on the one hand, but also opportunities," he says. "I think the next year or two is actually going to be quite exciting. We will have to manage uncertainty but also some huge opportunities. The world is moving very fast. Look at the context our industry operates in, whether it's climate change, population movement, constraints on investment, resource limitations, security threats, you name it. All of this creates opportunity," says Haigh.

Opportunities and assets

Haigh sees three main areas of opportunity for ACE and its members over the coming year. "Firstly, the importance of managing our existing assets. As a nation we've got assets that are not getting any younger and there are lots of them. Secondly, information in the digital age we are now in, and how that information is then used, is also crucial and the third area of opportunity is how we can deliver more efficiently," he says.

As a collaborator by nature, Haigh is keen to see a more joined up industry and ACE playing its part in that. "I'd like to see us start talking about ourselves as an infrastructure industry, rather than as a construction or a design industry and as an industry that is managing the best out of our infrastructure," he says. "This means providing a good product to the end user, achieving better whole life costs and being as professional as we can be in getting the

most out of our assets," he explains.

Haigh also highlights the developing digital landscape as a key priority. "We need to recognise that information more and more is a resource for us. Whether that's around enabling digital delivery for new build or in promoting smart infrastructure, we need to understand that our infrastructure world will be different because of the way that data will be used and we need to be on top of that," he says. "We also need to find different ways of delivering our services in the new digital environment," says Haigh, who includes ACE in that and the way it delivers to its members.

Haigh's third area of opportunity is delivery. "We are already seeing a move towards much more efficient delivery, with increasing standardisation, automation in design, much more integration between all the players in the infrastructure world, offsite construction and generally greater integration across the value chain," he says. "ACE and its members needs to be at the forefront of that," Haigh says.

Integration and diversity

Haigh says he plans to work with the whole industry to try to create better integration. It's something that is close to his heart as a director of JN Bentley, which is well known for its integrated delivery in the water industry.

Haigh also highlights the continuing importance of skills as a priority, especially at a time when the industry is being called upon to deliver the government's ambitious infrastructure plans. "Underlining everything we do is the ongoing skills shortage and the potential for a severe skills shortage going forward," he says. "I'm a huge advocate of making sure we attract people into the industry at the earliest possible age, whether through the university route or apprenticeships.

Tackling issues

Haigh sees the diversity challenge as crucial to increasing the industry's talent pool. "You can't disconnect the skills shortage from equality and diversity," he says. "If we are to attract the best and most talented people into our industry then we have to attract everyone. We still have far too few women graduating or going through the apprenticeship route to engineering and as an industry we have a lot more to do to become an inclusive workplace," says Haigh.

It's an area to which he is passionately committed. Haigh is a strong supporter of IntoUniversity, a charity supporting less advantaged children to gain access to

further education. "I've seen first-hand in my own company how you can make progress in the area of diversity by putting the effort in and tackling some these issues head-on. I have seen it happen. We also need to work in partnership with schools and universities to ensure that the pipeline is coming through," he says.

Haigh says that ACE's profile as a vocal organisation that speaks up for its

members and the industry is a crucial one and a key benefit of membership. "We have to make sure that we have as strong a voice as we possibly can. The strength of that voice is proportionate to the people and companies that make up an organisation like ACE, so it's about strength in numbers and strength in knowledge and it is a voice that is really needed by our industry," he says.

New board appointments at ACE

As well as announcing Mike Haigh as its new chairman, ACE has revealed a number of other new appointments to its board, including two new vice chairs.

The first vice chair is Nick Taylor, chief executive at Waterman Group and the second is Ramboll managing director Mathew Riley. Previous chairman, Gavin English of IMC Worldwide, continues as an ACE board member and is the immediate past chair.

Other new board members include Rajiv Sudan, strategy director at AMEC Foster

Wheeler, who chairs the ACE Membership Group, Tania Heap, group people director at Mott MacDonald, who chairs ACE HR Taskforce, Athena Livesey, principal engineering geologist at WSP|Parsons Brinkerhoff who chairs the ACE Progress Network Group of young professionals, Joanna Streeten, director, head of London project management at AECOM who is chair of the ACE Public Affairs Group and ACE Cymru Wales chair, Neil Sadler, a consultant at Cass Hayward.

The full list of ACE board members for 2017 is as follows:

- **ACE Chair** – Mike Haigh, managing director, Mott MacDonald
- **Immediate Past Chair** – Gavin English, IMC Worldwide
- **First Vice Chair** – Nick Taylor, chief executive, Waterman Group
- **Second Vice Chair and Chair of London Regional Group** – Mathew Riley, managing director, Ramboll
- **Chair of Technician Apprenticeship Consortium (TAC)** – Graham Nicholson, executive managing director, Tony Gee and Partners
- **Chair of ACE Best Business Practice Group** – Jeannie Edwards, human resources director, MWH
- **ACE Treasurer** – Andrew Cowell, engineering director, MWH
- **Chair of ACE Northern Ireland** – Alan Barr, technical director, RPS
- **Chair of ACE Scotland** – Simon Innes, managing director, Goodson Associates
- **Chair of ACE North** – Mike Barber, director, M W Barber Associates Limited
- **Chair of ACE Cymru Wales** – Neil Sadler, consultant, Cass Hayward
- **Chair of ACE Major Projects** – Patrick Flaherty, chief executive, UK and Ireland, AECOM
- **Chair of ACE International Business Group** – Dr Bernard Obika, chief executive, Roughton Group
- **Chair of ACE SME Forum** – Michael Brown, business development director, GEO Environmental Services
- **Chair of ACE Legal & Commercial Group** – Henry Pipe, senior partner, Max Fordham
- **Chair of ACE Membership Group** – Rajiv Sudan, strategy director, AMEC Foster Wheeler
- **Chair of ACE Progress Network Group** – Athena Livesey, principal engineering geologist, WSP|Parsons Brinkerhoff
- **Chair of ACE HR Taskforce** – Tania Heap, group people director, Mott MacDonald
- **Chair of ACE Public Affairs Group** – Joanna Streeten, director, head of London project management, AECOM
- **Board Member and Company Secretary** – Dr Nelson Ogunshakin OBE, chief executive, ACE

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