



Dear Members,

I am writing this in July 2009 during the relatively quiet period in the annual cycle of the Major Projects Association, which gives me time to reflect upon all of the events and activities of the past 12 months. As I review the year's programme I realise that this has been a year of great speakers, who have brought insight, wisdom, creativity and rigour to our proceedings.

This time last year I had just thanked General Sir Mike Jackson GCB CBE DSO for giving the 5th Annual Prestige Lecture in which he entertained us with stories from his distinguished career. This week I have written to thank Professor Dame

Ann Dowling of Cambridge University for splendidly following him with the 6th Prestige Lecture. Her approach was very different from Sir Mike's although just as engaging -- bringing academic rigour to the Telford Theatre of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Between these two renowned personalities and lectures, we have been sustained by a range of speakers who have been ready to discuss the lessons they have learned about the successes (and the failures) of major projects. I cannot name them all and I risk offending those that I omit, but some contributions are worth highlighting.

Steven Norris opened the 2008 Annual Conference with an after dinner keynote speech in which he shared his passion for regenerating London. He was immensely knowledgeable and entertaining -- not always an easy combination. Steven inspirationally set the scene, and the following day we were fortunate to hear from some of the most significant players in the regeneration of the capital, including Baroness Jo Valentine, Chief Executive of London First, and Sarah Ebanja, Deputy Chief Executive of the London Development Agency.

Many of our other excellent speakers during the year were connected to London -- although this was not a deliberate plan on our part. Sir Robin Wales the Mayor of Newham inspired the delegates at our seminar entitled "Beyond the London 2012 Games" in which he talked about the legacy that the games will leave and how he hoped it would bring greater wealth and improved health for the people of Newham. Tony Walters, Chief Engineer of Crossrail, talked about London's other megaproject in the March seminar on "Managing Complexity". He kept delegates fixed to their seats whilst he impressed upon us the magnitude of tasks that Crossrail must complete over the next seven years.

The "Managing Complexity" seminar was, for me, a highlight of the programme. It completely fulfilled the Association's objective of "helping to improve the initiation and delivery of major projects through the sharing of experience, knowledge and ideas." Stephen Jones from The Nichols Group had everyone's attention as he set out his notion of 'Project Personality'. Sir Robert Hayman-Joyce, in his Chairman's closing remarks

summed up some of the key factors for managing complexity as requiring a clear vision, motivated staff and honest brokerage. I recommend that you read the report of the seminar on our website, if just for Robert's concluding comments.

We were hugely honoured to have amongst the speakers at the May case study seminar Alec Erwin, former South African Government Minister, and Brian Bruce, Chief Executive of Murray & Roberts. Together with our former Chairman, Sir Alan Cockshaw, they delivered the perfect MPA event -- frank, open and honest about the problems and failures as well as the successes in delivery of South Africa's primary infrastructure capital expansion programme.

As I pause before the commencement of another year of events I know that this has been a difficult period for many of our members. In such times, we need to see the opportunities as well as the risks and the Board of Directors, the Programme Committee and the Executive team are committed to maintaining and improving the effectiveness of the Association. I look forward to another remarkable year.

R. Walmsley.

Sir Robert Walmsley KCB
Chairman
Major Projects Association