

## Passing the test of time



It appears we are moving into an age of uncertainty in the industry as it continues to develop at a challenging pace.

Many are questioning the way forward for transport planning, there is a new direction for the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), uncharted territory in the shape of devolution and unpredictable and more frequent extreme weather to deal with, without a proper

structure to appraise and assess either a response to flooding or the way forward in terms of resilience.

But far be it for *Surveyor* to dwell on negativity. The only way forward is to tackle these issues head-on and in collaboration with each other rather than in silos.

The CIHT FUTURES project puts forward a way of navigating uncertainty. It distinguishes between a 'regime-compliant' decision pathway, based on the world as it is, and a 'regime-testing' one. It's fascinating stuff, but will scenarios like this really get us to where we need to be to address so many changing parts of the industry?

The principle we come back to is that good engineering will stand the test of time. Good engineering not only answers the questions we are posing now but also answers the ones that might be coming tomorrow or at least means an asset can adapt to them.

We need to start thinking now about how the engineering techniques we use at present can be future-proofed or, do we need to adopt new ones?

The development of technology and use of data will help too. In the last decade we have gone from hardly having any data on the state of our road network to some of the most advanced asset management software packages in the world. They not only show us the state of the network now, but can also predict what they might look like in years to come if we invest in them or, more importantly, if we don't.

What we need to develop further is the user management elements of some of these systems; the need to be robust enough to help deliver information and decisions we can act on now and be flexible enough to adapt to the fast pace of the sector.

That, added with the brilliant engineers we already have, should help us cut through this age of uncertainty. But we must move forward together if we want to achieve real success.

Adrian Tatum,  
Group Content Editor  
*Surveyor*

• **Group Content Editor:** Adrian Tatum (01935 39408 atatum@hgluk.com) • **Content Editor, Traffic and Transport:** Dominic Browne (020 7973 4679 dbrowne@hgluk.com) • **Reporters:** Chris Ames (020 7973 4628 cames@hgluk.com) / Rhodri Clark • **Sub-Editors/Design:** Jannine Ivy/Lisa Awan/El • **Editorial Director:** Michael Burton • **Recruitment Sales:** Ravi Sharma (020 7973 6675 rsharma@hgluk.com) • **Commercial Managers:** Steven Cobb (020 7973 4688 scobb@hgluk.com) / Kara Brazier-Roffel (020 7973 4751) / Jason Pidgeon (020 7973 4645 jpidgeon@hgluk.com) / Samantha Marsh (020 7973 4698 smmarsh@hgluk.com) • **Marketing Manager:** Pauline Smith (020 7973 6698 psmith@hgluk.com) • **Production Manager Print/Digital:** Sue Taylor (020 7973 4662 staylor@hgluk.com) • **Production Executive:** Gareth Toogood (020 7973 6603 gtoogood@hgluk.com) • **Managing Director:** Gaius Bland

**Editorial Advisory Board:** Tony Gibbons • David Kinsey • George Lee • Matthew Lugg • Carol Valentine • Roger Williams

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