

DISMANTLING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMA

Urban demolition and pro-active environmental concern may at first seem to be oddly-matched concepts. With Fast-Track-14 (FT-14) through Laing O'Rourke, Clifford Devlin is showing them to be very sustainable bedfellows on a daily working basis.



East London-based Clifford Devlin specialises in delivering logistically difficult, complex, city centre projects. The challenges are considerable. They include a lack of space and the proximity of sensitive receptors, such as residential property, live offices and retail outlets.

Progress in financial terms - turnover reached £15m in 2008 - and a growing number of awards and commendations both demonstrate how expansion can be achieved without compromising environmental objectives.

"Part of our growth strategy is to look at long-term partnerships with blue chips," explains H&S Manager, Paul Clarke-Scholes. "We share the ethos of partnering and being candid on issues that affect stakeholders. One consequence is that we must perpetually sharpen our pencil to add value, and that includes the environment."

Integrated thinking for accountable demolition

There are logical reasons. Demolition can typically account for 5% of a main contractor's turnover. It is



also increasingly attracting local authority interest. Sustainable demolition will be a core principal in East London regeneration prior to 2012.

Brownfield redevelopment now depends squarely on sophisticated demolition planning and execution. As well as being involved as a demolition contractor in East London regeneration, Clifford Devlin is working with contractors Wates Living Space and Hackney Homes to generate sustainable social housing programmes in the capital where environmental considerations really do matter.

They matter particularly to Clarke-Scholes, who also managed the implementation of an environmental management system (EMS) on a six-month-long ISYS International Fast-Track-14 (FT-14) peer-group programme championed by Laing O'Rourke to align preferred suppliers with its robust environmental objectives and invigorate its whole supply chain.

With early Certification to ISO 14001 via FT-14, the international environmental Standard has been combined with OHSAS 18001 (occupational health) and ISO 9001 (quality) within Clifford Devlin's integrated management system, creating a powerful performance management tool.

Balancing benefits

Clarke-Scholes readily admits that daily commercial priorities did pressurise his initial input to the FT-14 programme, where participating company managers routinely commit to at least three days a month in creating an active, pragmatic, results-orientated EMS. But he quickly notes the merits. "I liked it," he says. "It got me going, although I did take slightly longer. My final task has been to introduce our environmental objectives into the company environmental plan and then make a point of showing everyone why their direct involvement now has such pivotal benefits," he adds.

Urban regeneration makes increasingly stringent environmental demands of clients and contractors.



Speed as the mother of invention

While the momentum to improve environmental performance - with matching business benefits - is now rising dramatically, Clarke-Scholes' first attempt to write an ISO 14001 management system was in 1996. "It was fairly simplistic, using an external consultant," he adds. "Each time there was a non-conformity, fixing it took an excessive length of time. Every time we filled six gaps, six more would appear. It was difficult to identify any meaningful journey.

"FT-14 certainly moved much faster. I particularly liked the process maps and am adapting the same approach for our 18001 system." He also identifies another early advantage, recognised by firms under mounting client pressure to justify their detailed plans for responsible, accountable environmental management. "It is nice to tick the "yes" boxes in pre-tendering questionnaires," he says.

Efficient and effective

FT-14 offers companies a streamlined route to ISO 14001 environmental compliance by methodically bridging information barriers that often quite reasonably thwart many hard-working companies. As a result, they can focus very sharply and on resolving the real effects of their operations on the environment and stakeholders. More importantly still, systematically paring down inefficiencies removes negative pressures from profit margins, cuts waste and allows companies to confidently control risks associated with new commercial opportunities, especially in turbulent and competitive markets.

Environmental path-finding

Demolition contractors are inevitably at the fore of environmental challenges, and, therefore, best practice. The Environment Agency requires extensive sorting to remove

hazardous material, with additional manpower costs and latent health and safety implications. Effective recycling is essential. New Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) mean eight to nine routinely segregated waste streams. Dust suppression is important, although damping down creates additional water to be well managed. Local authorities are concerned to meet PM10 pollution targets. EU guidelines are demanding. The practicalities of city centre working restrict working hours. Noise abatement is important for staff on site and neighbours.

Environmental accountability

"Because of the complex processes intrinsic to demolition, we have had environmental management plans on site for three to four years. But before ISYS' FT-14, our system was never well developed. One thing we did not have was corporate input, accountable audits and costings for development," adds Clarke-Scholes.

"As a company, we have been flying the flag as environmentalists. We can see the distinct advantages for demolition, which is why we have been active in qualifying for tendering.

Underground culture change

Clifford Devlin is involved in the redevelopment of a London Underground station site into prime "city" office accommodation in a £1.3 million demolition project that involves careful deconstruction of floors one-by-one using mini-excavators with concrete pulveriser / cracker attachments as well as saw-cutting of basement slabs. Life in the busy tube station and neighbouring offices must go on. Strict controls cover dust, noise and vibration - environmental impacts are not abstract concepts. However, they are opportunities for improvement with strategic implications and transferable benefits, a challenge the demolition industry must be ready to take up.



Tim Clifford, MD, Clifford Devlin Ltd (left) receives his Fast-Track-14 successful completion certificate from Laing O'Rourke Director, Chris Scutt.

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