



Introductory film

Presented by Adam Hart-Davis

The ability to build things has always been important.

Early on it was driven by the need to survive, to have protection against the enemies and also to make simple places to live, to keep the precious animals in and the weather out.

But then our needs grew and we demanded churches, public buildings, workplaces, shops, roads, bridges.

The skills involved became more and more complicated; trained people and special equipment were needed to do the work, and that was when construction became an industry.

And today that industry is fantastically important. Just look around – we're utterly surrounded by construction. It's a wonderful, living advertisement for the skills of all those people involved.

With such an important place in our lives, and so much professionalism in the industry, why is it that builders have such a rotten reputation?

Here are a few clues...

This delivery vehicle is on the pavement.

This safety fence offers no protection at all.

This hole beside a pavement is virtually unprotected and the nearby ramp, almost useless.

Ear defenders help the workers, but won't stop the public suffering from noise pollution.

And here's another preventable hazard – clouds of uncomfortable dust.

The state of this road surface will make life difficult for mums with pushchairs and the elderly. This pavement has been made an assault course for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

And here's an example of difficult site access, with no signs to show where the office is.

And how confusing is this sign?

These stacked materials block the path completely.

And this site office doesn't present the public with a good image of the constructor, or his industry.

And what about this mess?

If you're in the construction industry, it's easy to find good reasons for these problems. Just one careless worker in a large workforce, illness or holidays affecting schedules, unexpected delays or just being so focused on the job, that you don't stop to think how you are disturbing anyone else.

But if members of the public are affected by building works, then they just see the contractor as a bad neighbour – someone who doesn't care what they think.

Now, I am not suggesting for a moment that all building sites make bad neighbours. There are plenty of sites run by thoughtful people who really care about the people around them and show a real concern for the environment.

But unfortunately there are also plenty of sites run by people who don't. That's why some very experienced industry professionals founded the Considerate Constructors Scheme. Its aim is to improve the image of the construction industry.

But how can any organisation do that without the power to make and enforce laws? Well, first the Scheme produced a set of guidelines; simple, sensible and non-technical, for all those working on the construction process; that's architects, contractors and clients.

And their main focus was on consideration - consideration for the public, for the environment and for those working in the industry.

After that, they had to rely on persuasion and on facing the inevitable questions; why should we? What's in it for us?

Pam Hobson, Public Liaison Manager, Balfour Beatty Major Civil Engineering:

When I first joined there were still some within the industry who seemed to be of the opinion that they could do what they liked, how they liked and when they liked. Thankfully, over the periods that I've been involved, I've noticed a major change and I think that is in principle due to CCS values being spread out throughout the industry.

Chris King, Managing Director, Kier Partnership Homes:

It's a widely recognised Scheme with a very big take-up within the industry and a lot of competition within the industry to achieve good scores on the Monitoring visits, so it's become almost a pallet for managing construction sites well and for people to measure themselves against the competitors.

Chris Evans, Project Director, Balfour Beatty:

The Considerate Constructors Scheme has definitely raised the bar in the industry in terms of giving constructors a real incentive to strive to improve and do more than the minimum and look after the community and stakeholders around you. So, yes, there is no doubt that it has shown a real benefit across the industry ever since it was brought in.

Lindsay Vamplew, Project Director, Network Rail:

It enables us to have a standard – the Scheme gives us a standard that we can benchmark other companies from. So when we select a company that is already accredited to the Scheme, we know what we are buying; likewise the stakeholders are looking for the Scheme to be in place as a benchmark that they can judge the projects against.

Clearly the principles of considerate construction do make sense to the industry and an ever-increasing number of sites are signing up. The figures are startling. But what actually is involved in joining the Scheme?

For a start, everyone registering a construction project with the Scheme, of any size, or any type, is given a set of guidelines, all of them based on common sense, and aimed at preventing the sort of problems we've already seen.

Once registered, the contractors are allowed to display these posters so the public know what they are committed to.

To check the Scheme's guidelines are being followed, there is a team of more than 100 experienced Monitors, all of them very knowledgeable professionals from inside the industry. They visit every site registered with the Scheme and report on what they find.

The Monitors aren't just examiners who will only pass or fail a site; they also act as mentors, discussing problems and suggesting sensible improvements that will help raise the site's performance beyond the statutory requirements.

Chris King, Managing Director, Kier Partnership Homes:

The Monitor visits are really important to us. We use them right the way across the board in terms of measuring performance. They are a key part of our board papers. They are a key performance indicator for us in terms of the performance of each site and I know that if sites are delivering good scores, not only are they well run and safe to work on, but they are almost inevitable profitable. So for me, good Considerate Constructors scores equals efficiency and profitability.

For the really good sites, awards are given for the best of best practice and of course that means plenty of opportunities for good publicity, and improving the image of both the construction involved and the industry.

Site manager:

I believe if you follow this Scheme, you will improve your site, you will improve your image and I believe the whole industry will come out of it looking far more professional

Working within the considerate constructors' Code benefits companies of every type and size.

Raising levels of awareness about the public and the environment pays huge dividends; improving the image of both the companies involved and the industry, while reducing complaints because there is more dialogue and positive interaction.

That's why more and more of these banners and posters are being seen around the country; from Land's End to Aberdeen, Cardiff to Belfast.

This Scheme benefits everyone involved. Behind the scenes, the workers get much better conditions.

The clients are going to be pleased because any contractor working within the Scheme is liable to cause fewer problems during a job and leave fewer headaches afterwards.

And best of all, the public, they get a much better deal; less inconvenience, more care and more courtesy.

*Annett Thompson, Project Manager, Suffolk County Council:
The Considerate Constructors Scheme actually sets the standard.*

*Keith Miller, Director, Walker Management:
It's a worthwhile scheme – it is a useful scheme.*

*Mike Ramsey, Framework Director, Black and Veatch:
I think Considerate Constructors promotes exactly what we ought to be doing.*

*Darren Dobson, Project Manager, Costain:
The Considerate Constructors Scheme adds value.*

*Richard Shroll, Project Director, Wates Construction:
The Scheme, commercially, I believe creates efficiencies.*

*David Lines, Construction Director, Mansell Construction:
Yes, it is a good Scheme to be part of.*

*Paul Chandler, Managing Director, Skanska:
I think the Scheme actively encourages us all to do better every day.*