

# Consulta

**ACEI Newsletter - 28 October 2021**

## Information and Advice for ACEI Members

### ACEI President's Mid-Term Message



The launch of the Government's National Development Plan (NDP) this month and the Housing for All plan last month are a welcome signal of its commitment to investment in public infrastructure. These plans are being launched at a time when activity in our industry is increasing at a significant rate.

Notwithstanding the positive market sentiment, there remain challenges that our businesses face. These have been explored in detail in a study commissioned by ACEI, on the state of our profession. It concluded that the services provided by Consulting Engineers are undervalued by our clients, with an accompanying gap in remuneration levels for our staff.

There are other pressing challenges that have come to the fore in recent years, including the astronomical increases in the cost of professional indemnity insurance (PII), and the struggle to attract and retain talent. This human resource issue is a global problem and is present across the full supply chain, with clients, professional advisors and contractors/developers all struggling to staff up.

ACEI is focused on these topics and continues to advocate on behalf of its member firms. Through its Secretariat, Executive Committee and relevant sub-committee (Risk / PII / Procurement Committee), the association has engaged extensively with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). We focused on eight critical issues that affect liability and thereby the cost and availability of PII. ACEI, along with others in our industry, also engaged with the insurance industry, the Dáil and the media, advocating for changes. We pushed to remove the unlimited liability placed on consultants – a feature of the Government's standard conditions of engagement – as one of our top priorities.

Communicating with members was important, with an [Advice Note](#) issued earlier this year, encouraging member firms to maintain a fair risk / reward balance, in terms of fees earned versus liability exposure. This work was effective in bringing about change and I was very pleased last month when we received an [update note](#) from the OGP, advising that they would introduce a cap on consultants' liability into the standard conditions of engagement. While there are other battles to be fought relating to PII, this is a great improvement.

There have been other successes, notably the recent agreement with Irish Water (IW), for certification of Developers' connection agreements. Our Structures Committee has led a very determined campaign, to address lack of alignment across IW requirements for drainage connections, which were making it very difficult for Developers to secure sign-off on connections they had installed. A form for the [Consultants Letter of Confirmation](#) has been agreed between with IW and now provides a clear and uncontested process for our clients to secure certification of connections.

I am very impressed with the great results being delivered by the association. I am also looking forward to another initiative that is being launched next month, by our Sustainability Committee, to support member firms reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Accord. Stay tuned for details of our Pledge to Net Zero campaign, which will be launched with a live webinar on November 9th.

**David McHugh**  
**ACEI President 2021-2022**

### Online Resources

- [HSE](#)
- [Revenue](#)
- [Institute of Public Health](#)
- [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#)
- [Health & Safety Authority](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [Health Protection Surveillance Centre](#)
- [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)

## ACEI Commits to Pledge to Net Zero

To address ACEI's commitment to achieving net zero carbon, members will be provided with support from the association to register for and commit to the [Pledge to Net Zero](#) science-based targets. A webinar on this is planned for 2pm on 9 November where members of the Sustainability Committee will outline the steps involved and explain how to register for Pledge to Net Zero. Booking details for the webinar are available on the [ACEI Website](#).

## ACEI M&E & M&ECA Joint Conference

A very successful conference took place in Mount Juliet, Kilkenny on 22 October. Joining forces on a theme of: 'M&E Engineers & Contractors in a New Built Environment' was the ACEI M&E Committee and the M&E Contractors Association (M&ECA). ACEI Secretary General Sarah Ingle opened the conference and CEO of Ethos Engineering, Greg Hayden was a key panel member. M&E Convenor Ray Curran provided closing remarks at the gala dinner. The event was moderated by Phillip Matthews and sponsored by Eaton and Davy.

## Housing for All Progress Report

ACEI is pleased to note that a new *Housing for All Q3 2021 Progress Report* was published recently. The new housing plan for Ireland commits to increasing the supply of housing to an annual average of 33,000 units over the next ten years, and is underpinned by very high levels of government investment in social and affordable housing. The progress report indicates the plan's delivery rate standing at 91%, with 10 of 11 measures delivered on schedule. The last three months have also provided a welcome rise in key indicators of activity in the housing sector including commencement and completion rates.

## Digital twins: The Case for Open-Source

According to Keith Bentley, founder and CTO, Bentley Systems, in order to achieve sustainable digital twins for infrastructure, it is crucial to build systems around open-source technology to retain control.

In a [recent article](#) Bentley notes that digital twins are currently reshaping the built environment in relation to how infrastructure is designed, constructed, and operated. He states that 'The advent of digital twins has helped the industry advance existing BIMcentric processes by improving data quality and accessibility. Importantly, infrastructure digital twins can be achieved "in place," without having to disrupt or replace existing workflows or systems.'

## Recent Good News

- Congratulations are due to Cian McGuinness, Geotechnical Director in member firm RPS as he was recently named one of the first ever '[Carbon Champions](#)' by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). Cian was commended for his innovative design work at the Glasgow Airport Investment Area (GAIA).
- Earlier this month in Firbourg, Switzerland, a 10m [footbridge](#) was constructed out of recycled concrete blocks, with no concrete poured. The blocks were cut into individual pieces on site and assembled into a prestressed arch.

## EFCA Newsletter

The October 2021 edition of the [EFCA Newsletter](#) was recently published. Included in this edition is information on the first EU Sustainable Investment Summit. It was noted at the event that the main challenge is to develop a robust pipeline of investment projects for the European Green Deal.

## FIDIC Bulletin 4: Social Employment Impact

This bulletin is the fourth in a series that FIDIC has been issuing periodically on the impact of COVID-19 on business practices in consulting engineering firms. [The bulletin](#) focuses on new and evolved challenges consulting engineering firms face with respect to gender, caregivers, young professionals, contract employees and sub-consultants and the resulting best practices.

## Retrofitting Domestic Buildings for Energy Programme

Engineers Ireland has developed a [new CPD programme](#), 'Retrofitting Domestic Buildings for Energy Efficiency' which will begin on 10 November 2021. The programme focuses particularly on the recommendations set out in the NSAI SR54 "Code of Practice – Methodology for the Energy Efficient Retrofit of Existing Dwellings" and is divided into 5 distinct modules. The modules will cover topics including: Near Zero Energy Buildings, Basic Building Physics, Building Fabric, Building Services and Renewable Energy.

## New CEO Title: Chief Empathy Officer

Empathy was always a critical leadership skill, and according to Aliza Knox writing in [Forbes](#) it is needed now more than ever. Knox notes that 'there have been discussions about whether empathy in a leader is "nice to have" or a strategic imperative. It turns out to be the latter.' She goes on to cite new research from Catalyst which shows, "a clear path from senior leader and manager empathy to enhanced employee innovation and work engagement." Knox concludes that 'empathetic leaders not only have more innovative, productive teams, but also are more likely to keep good employees.'