

# Contractors must take responsibility

Chief construction adviser places main contractors at the heart of carbon reduction efforts

## POLITICS

BY NICK WHITTEN

Chief construction adviser Paul Morrell has told contractors they must coordinate the industry's carbon reduction efforts.

In an interview with *Construction News*, Mr Morrell said contractors had "the skills and ability to integrate the whole process".

Appointed as the first CCA at the end of November, Mr Morrell's first task has been to lead the government-commissioned Low Carbon Construction Review.

The review is exploring the ways in which the construction industry can help the UK meet its carbon reduction goals, and Mr Morrell is due to report his initial findings this spring.

He said: "Contractors are the natural integrators. They have to bring the whole process together."

The Low Carbon Construction Review was announced by business secretary Lord Mandelson last September, who said: "The sector will play a crucial part as the UK tackles climate change, as emissions from buildings account for around 44 per cent of Britain's total end-use carbon emissions."

But Mr Morrell said: "My least favourite expression is that buildings consume 40 per cent of energy. The reality is that buildings consume energy because that is where people are.

"It is like blaming a beach for consumption of suntan lotion."

Mr Morrell said the industry's response would be driven by the recognition of a huge potential market. "That's what gets any business up in the morning," he said.

"It is important to equip ourselves now. We need to work out the solutions to the problem on the supply side and what the best outcome could be."

He added: "The best bet is that carbon emissions will start to become more expensive from about 2012 to 2013.



Morrell: firms with only a short-term attitude to emissions will be left behind

"I do not see a huge amount going on in the industry to prepare itself to significantly reduce its carbon emissions.

"Those demonstrating only a short-term interest will be left behind. They need to take a long-term interest."

Mr Morrell said contractors had a unique position as they have direct contact with both clients and the supply chain.

He said: "Contractors have the skills and the ability to drive this

through the procurement process.

"They need to add to their combination of skills a genuine partnering attitude down through the supply chain. They need to manage and motivate designers, architects and manufacturers."

But he added: "I will not push anybody. This is a subject we ought to be in agreement on."

The CCA warned that if changes did not start to happen in the next year or two then they would be enforced through regulation.

**"Blaming buildings for energy use is like blaming beaches for consumption of suntan lotion"**

PAUL MORRELL, CCA

Meanwhile, in a separate interview with *The Times*, Mr Morrell said buildings from the 60s and 70s may need to be torn down to help meet carbon emission standards.

He said: "In the 60s, everything was built cheaper, faster and nastier. If you are going to try to fix buildings, then really you won't have too many problems with anything built earlier than the 50s or after the 80s.

"Although you can do some things to buildings from the 60s and 70s, like replacing the roofs, there are probably some places that need to come down entirely."

Mr Morrell added: "The buildings that pose the most difficulties are semi-industrialised, highly inefficient, badly insulated and so ugly that they are not worth refurbishing."

## Legislation is one thing but we also need support



### ANALYSIS

DR PAUL TOYNE

The Strategic Forum for Construction has set a target of a 15 per cent reduction in carbon from the construction process and related transport by the end of 2012.

People see our industry as fragmented, but in this forum we have a variety of organisations that want to share information and are keen on collaborating.

We are aiming to develop an action plan by the end of March that will come up with a set of

meaningful proposals.

The challenge has been to gather robust data so that we can reliably measure carbon footprints now and our progress against the 15 per cent target.

Paul Morrell is referring to us contractors as integrators because of our links to clients and the supply chain.

The contractors can play a useful role in ensuring the supply chain is fit for purpose, but we in turn need to be able to demonstrate our own fitness.

Once companies understand the scale of the problem they will see the business opportunity.

If you are part of the supply chain wanting to deliver to a major contractor, you would want to ensure they use you.

All legislation is pointing towards change. The companies that can innovate and respond now will get through this.

We need government support for the industry as a whole in terms of funding and incentives, particularly for the parts of the supply chain that may struggle.

Dr Paul Toyne is head of sustainability at Bovis Lend Lease and chairman of the Strategic Forum for Construction climate change work group