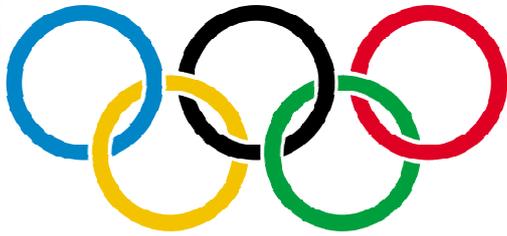


BENCHPRESS



Since I last wrote to you all in the Autumn edition of Benchpress we have concluded our significant involvement in helping to deliver the Olympics later this year. We can all be proud of the part we have played in laying on the “greatest show on earth”. At its peak we employed over 100 operatives, just on and around the project, with involvement on the athletes village, the basketball arena, the BMX stadium, the tennis courts and the adjacent Westfield shopping centre in Stratford. Now that this work is finished we no longer have a need for our East London yard and this closed at the end of March. This closure was part of a wider plan of consolidation within the business to reflect the reduced scale of operations in the short term. There have been some cut backs and these have been necessary to ensure our competitiveness, in what is still a difficult market place, but the loyalty of our established customers has enabled us to maintain our position as one of the leading scaffolding business in our industry.

Since Christmas we have been extremely successful in picking up new orders and the pipeline going forward is also very promising. It looks like we will all be very busy through the spring and summer and, due to our previous scale, we will have plenty of materials to service this work without the need for further investment for some time.

During recent months you will have become aware of some initiatives intended to ensure our competitiveness to help us continue winning new work whilst remaining profitable.

We have already standardised a monthly pay cycle for all of our employees, instead of just the office staff, and although I know this was not a popular move it has significantly helped the Company’s cash flow which makes us stronger, which in turn is good for all of us.

We have carried out a series of meetings with the site managers in which we shared our objectives and strategy with a view to engage them so they, in turn, can inform the rest of you about our plans and targets. We have focused on commercial awareness, the need to work a full day for a full day’s pay, and how important your interaction on site, with our customers, is to repeat business and new work.

As has always been true, we all have our own part to play in ensuring a stable and secure future for all of us.

Please keep up the good work

Regards
Rob West
Managing Director



Olympic Athletes Village



The University of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford



Benchmark Scaffolding has just completed the Scaffold to the Tower & Spire at this Historic site in Oxford. The original Tower dates back to 1280AD and is a major tourist attraction within the old walled City (or it was until we covered it up). The site is situated at 120m above sea level, so wind loadings were a real problem with the design of the structure.

The scaffold, which rises over 60m above ground level, gives fine views over Oxford for anyone with the stamina to climb the ladder access to the top. Once there, on a bad day, the wind has the habit of smashing you against the Spire; so if the climb doesn't finish you off, the resulting head injuries probably will. All that aside, it's a magnificent scaffold built to the highest standards by Dave Crawford, Dave Hastings, Daren Redgrave & Conner Byrne during the worst possible weather conditions.

Only the south elevation is ground based with the other three sides being bridged and braced off the stone tower using a combination of 600 deep steel beams, 750 alloy beams & ladder beams.

Bob Young—Technical Director
London Region

Our *vision* is to be the scaffolding contractor of choice to our customers and employer of choice to our people.

Our *mission* is to not only "Set the Standards" but to progressively and continuously raise them across all aspects of our business.



Ashdown House,



Lambourn, Berkshire



Working Well Together



In March, we were approached by the HSE to do a demonstration on the use of Step-Up devices at a 'Working Well Together' free event at Magna, in Rotherham.

The morning session was attended by scaffolding companies to show them what is available and how it should be used correctly. Following the demonstration there was a question and answers session in which Benchmark's Glenn Smith and Kurtis White participated. They found that smaller companies looked at the negative aspect of the equipment and the financial implications of their use, whereas the larger companies were mostly already using them.

The afternoon session was aimed at roofing contractors, where they explained what the scaffold companies they employed should be doing to comply with the current legislation and their duty to ensure that the work was being carried out safely.

It was a worthwhile event which was well attended and, hopefully the participants will have a greater understanding of their legal duty to work safely at all times. They also now have a better understanding of the recent development of work equipment which has made scaffolding a safer occupation for all.

Billy Wood—SHE Advisor/Contracts Manager
Northern Region



Save Water

Did you know that the UK has less rainfall per person than our northern European neighbours, and London is drier than Istanbul?

In the UK, every person uses approximately 150 litres of water a day, a figure that has been growing every year by 1% since 1930. If you take into account the water that is needed to produce the food and products you consume in your day-to-day life (known as embedded water) you actually consume 3400 litres per day. This is quite alarming if you consider that the UK has less available water per person than most other European countries. If you live in the South East of England it is even more so, as this part of the country is the most water stressed.

Heating up water to take a shower or wash clothes in the washing machine not only impacts on your energy bills, but also results in the release of greenhouse gases, linking it to climate change.

As much as 25% of your household's energy bill comes from heating water, and domestic hot water accounts for 5% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, water companies also use lots of energy treating and pumping cold water, and this in turn releases even more greenhouse gases.

By making small behavioural changes and choosing more water-efficient products you can save water without sacrificing too much money, comfort, or level of service. Water efficiency is about reducing the amount of water you waste on a daily basis, not restricting what you use. (source Waterwise).

Water saving tips

Snub the tub

If everybody in your family of four replaces one bath a week with a five-minute shower, you can save up to £18 a year on gas bills and up to £21 on water bills (if you have a water meter).

Change your head

If a family of four replace their inefficient shower head with a water-efficient one, they could save around £72 on their gas bills and around £72 on their water bills (if they have a water meter) each year. That's a total saving of £150.

Fill 'em up!

Make sure that dishwashers and washing machines are full before you use them, and always use the most efficient water and energy settings. When it's time to replace your appliance, look for the Energy Saving Recommended logo: products with this logo will save both energy and water.

Suds law

Using a sink of water to wash up twice a day rather than having the hot tap running could save around £34 a year on your gas bill and around £25 on your water bill (if you have a water meter). If you need to rinse utensils or wash vegetables, use cold water if possible and don't leave the tap running!

Go off the boil

Kettles use a lot of electricity, so try not to boil water you won't use: most kettles can boil as little as a mugful. This could save you around £7 a year on energy bills. If everyone in the UK did this, we could save enough electricity in a year to power the UK's street lights for one month.

Turn it off

A running tap wastes more than six litres of water a minute, so turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face - and use cold water if you don't need hot.

Don't be a drip

A dripping tap can waste more than 5,500 litres of water a year, so make sure your taps are properly turned off and change washers promptly when taps start to drip.

Make it go further

Try to reuse unused water: for example, pour leftover glasses of water on houseplants and avoid wasting water from running taps while waiting for hot water.

And in the Garden...

Get your butt in gear

Your roof collects tens of thousands of litres of water each year, but it runs straight into the drains. Collect it in a water butt and you can use it to water your garden and wash your car. There's a bonus: rainwater is softer than tap water, so it's better for plants - use it for your houseplants too!

Safety



We are still in a recession and, in times like these, companies have to make cuts to survive. Benchmark Scaffolding will not compromise the safety of its men, or anybody affected by our work, by cutting safety standards.

In law we all have a duty to take reasonable care of ourselves and others who may be affected by our actions; in short, don't harm yourself or anybody else.

Benchmark's 2011 accident statistics show that slips and trips were yet again the most common accidents, with the most man days lost. Your responsibility to look after yourselves can go a long way to reducing the amount of slips and trips.

There are many ways you can contribute to lowering these figures. Be aware of your surroundings, access and your work area. If you see anything that can be a potential slip or trip, or any other hazard, you have several ways of preventing it from turning into an injury.

1. Clear the obstruction yourself, but if this cannot be done,
2. inform your supervisor, or the Principal Contractor, so they can make it safe.
3. Refuse to work in the area until it has been made safe, but
4. never leave it unresolved, for then it becomes somebody else's hazard and potential injury.

Health and safety was a major factor in the impressive growth of Benchmark Scaffolding, and we should not lose sight of that fact. The perception of those others who will give us work is most important, and the major contractors are still looking for safe companies to work with. The scaffolders within this company are our ambassadors and the way they work will go a long way to securing the next job, and the ones after.

As you see, this is not just about going home safely every night; it's also about the Company's future with an abundance of work.

Peter Booth—Safety Manager

SAFETY AWARDS

November

Matt Wilkinson (Carillion, Ellis Guildford School) won the Northern award. He was required to erect a number of scaffolds inside voids. Instead of climbing through holes in the shaft wall, with a potential risk of falling, he erected a mobile tower on the floor below to access the areas from a safe working platform.

Jason Hill (Café Royal, Piccadilly) won the London award for observing two operatives accessing an area on the scaffold that was not designated as a working platform (incomplete scaffold). Jason informed the operatives of the dangers of their actions and they promptly left the scaffold.

January

Gary Davies (Sheffield) won the Northern award. After dismantling a scaffold in a public area, the foot path was covered with debris. Gary decided to sweep the area up although it was not his job to do so, but thereby leaving the area safe for the general public.

Paul Rittenburg (SLAM, Bicester) won the London award for impressing the contractor by not only erecting the scaffold around a block in what seemed an impossibly short timescale, but more importantly carrying out the task without compromising safety.

February

Mark Hazlehurst (Rank Hovis, Gainsborough) won the Northern award. He discovered a gas leak and informed the appropriate people, following the correct site emergency procedures, thus preventing a potential incident.

Ramunas Arelis (Athletes Village, Stratford) won the London award for consistently working in a safe manner, making sure exclusion zones are in place, reporting any problems to his site manager and being recognised by the principal contractor. This has also shown in the standard of his work and his willingness to learn.

Happy 65th birthday to John who works in the Northern yard. Hope you enjoyed your day.

John Beattie turns
65

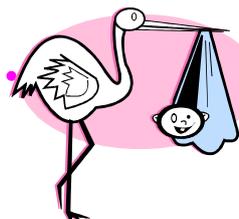
ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. Go/fall-just visiting/Go to jail/Free parking
2. Halle Berry
3. Ricky Gervais
4. Flopsy/Mopsy/Cotton-tail
5. Charlie & the Chocolate Factory
6. Lcarus
7. Sagittarius
8. Leonardo Da Vinci International
9. Twelve
10. Fourth day

If you've recently had a new addition to your family,
or a birthday coming up
send us a photo to the Barnsley office
and we'll make sure we show them in the next edition
or you could email us
barnsley@benchmarkscaffolding.com



Lottie Creaser is happy to announce
the birth of her 1st granddaughter
Lucy Mae born 19th February 2012
and weighing 6lb 7oz.



Quiz Time

1. What are the four corner squares on an English Monopoly Board?
2. Who played the part of Bond Girl 'Jinx' in the Bond film 'Die Another Day'?
3. Which Briton wrote the episode of the Simpsons which achieved record viewing figures on Sky One?
4. Name Peter Rabbit's three sisters?
5. What is the title of the children's book in which the main character's surname is Bucket?
6. Which mythological character died when he flew too close to the sun?
7. Astrologically speaking, two of the fire signs are LEO and ARIES, which is the third?
8. What is the name of Italy's largest airport, situated in Rome?
9. How many stars are on the European Union flag?
10. On what day of creation did God make the sun, the moon and the stars?

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Setting the Standards