

# Amey's holistic vision

NCE/ACE Consultant of the Year Amey tells *Impact* about its holistic asset management strategy. However, a one company solution is only part of the story.

Last time *Impact* spoke to Amey the grounds around their offices were frozen under several feet of snow. That served as a metaphor for the economic chill facing the country and our industry. So when they told us about their ongoing vision for an integrated end-to-end service the big question was how that would fare through the downturn.

The latest visit coincided with gleaming springtime sunshine as staff took part in a new cycle to work scheme. We can only hope the weather reflects the economic revival ahead. But Amey's consulting division MD Andy Milner is more concerned with whether the strategy is working amid ongoing economic uncertainty.

Andy Milner clearly believes it is going well. He explained: "Most of the firm's engineering work still stands alone from its other services. However, the developing end-to-end philosophy has proven to have some significant benefits, especially as the economy has struggled through the last two years."

It is seven years since Amey moved

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into the consultancy and engineering sector. They bought the award winning Owen Williams to expand their offering and have sought since to better establish themselves. That appears to have paid off. Amey was named the NCE/ACE Consultancy of the Year this April.

The firm's strategy is built upon a three stage view of asset management. Milner set out what that meant: "The first stage, not surprisingly, is planning and designing new infrastructure. In order to make efficient investment decisions about infrastructure you need to look not just at capital cost but operational costs. We add insight to the decision about how higher capital costs at the start can be

traded off for lower operational costs later. We can take that a step further with real live data about the infrastructure's use."

Stage two is asset management. Milner enthuses about what this means for the country and how it invests in future: "This is critical for the UK today. We have aging assets that need maintaining while still being used and they have to do more than they have in the past. The UK's population is increasing fast. Then you also have environmental constraints on what you can do. You can't just start building lots more roads. You've got to get more people on the rail network as the rail network is more sustainable."

These pressures on infrastructure pose challenges that he believes Amey's structure helps it to solve: "We have to get the best out of the materials, the best out of the asset and ensure we intervene at the right point to drive efficiency. We also understand the benefits of using technology to conquer these tasks."

Milner is an enthusiast for new technology. It can feed back better information about how an asset is used and provide greater support for the infrastructure. However, he warns that adding assets to a network, in this case to help gather data, can lead to complications.

"The new asset's performance profile will be completely different to the other assets already in existence. Therefore intelligent thinking is necessary to combine all the different asset types as well as looking at the optimum intervention to minimise cost and the impact on the network."

The third stage is one that Milner admits is often not considered to be asset management at all; the intelligent use of the assets: "We haven't re-invented the wheel but we have combined three stages of asset management. Take the example of the 80 percent carbon reduction target. You can build new buildings with sustainable materials, new ventilation systems, natural cooling and reed beds. Meanwhile the biggest way to effect carbon reduction on existing buildings is to change how the building is used. So you might find that you'll save





Amey's consulting division managing director  
Andy Milner

energy if you close blinds on one side of this building at three o'clock every day".

It can be difficult to change behaviour in this way. However, he remains enthusiastic: "People in the buildings have to take responsibility for that and we will work with clients to effect behavioural change. Similarly if we manage road traffic flows and train data then the impact you can have by managing the asset better is massive."

The three stage strategy is a big part of Amey's plans for the industry. It feels that it has taken a lead that other firms will eventually seek to follow. Milner stresses that Amey continues to work with outside expertise in specialist fields.

"We can't do everything. There are areas of expertise and niche markets that we don't seek to replicate. We still bring in and work with other companies on those and we know how valuable they remain when we are trying to win contracts".

This is important to Milner who wants clients and contractors to develop a mentality that goes beyond thinking "lets get that thing built".

He explained: "We can look at how we can make it cost less to build or operate and that generates cash for the client to invest in other projects. That then ties in with carbon reduction too. Right now in the middle of a financial crisis it is still an issue and in five years that is only going to grow. So we are doing a lot of work on managing carbon use in future. We have to be in a place where we make our

money by saving our clients money and carbon. A lot of the industry has to get there still."

A lot of the good work done by Amey progressing from design through to asset management could still be done with individual contracts for each part of the work. Indeed Amey still takes lots of its work from stand-alone contracts. So Milner explains why he feels the end to end service is the future.

"This is not new but it can be hard for organisations to quantify. It is to

## **"We have to make our money by saving our clients money and reducing carbon."**

develop the design that has the minimum maintenance profile. So that means using a base practical level of expertise in the design process that says 'don't put the street light there because it will be hard for the cherry picker to get to.' Then there is the technology driven by the operational side. So on street lighting we are driving hard on LEDs. Our challenge is to get the design to work so that we can introduce LEDs to our street lighting contracts as they have a cost efficiency and a carbon

efficiency. So the design side has to make that work."

"We think about ways we can get maximum flexibility from a network, even when you are doing maintenance on it. That also means combining the deterioration profile of different types of assets. So you aim not to have to make repeat visits but instead have them end their lives at the same time and then replace them together."

That added value is really important to Amey, especially with a lot of its work still done as standalone. Milner notes that around two thirds of its engineering work is still independent of their other work. That means that benefiting from deterioration modeling and health and safety insight, whether the company itself goes on to build and maintain the asset or not, is valuable at the design stage.

While Amey believes it is leading the way for the industry, Milner stresses that the firm has only done that by learning and continuing to try new things. He adds that as well as offering a complete end to end service Amey can also work on bespoke, standalone projects depending on the clients need.

"We have to keep reinventing ourselves and breaking new ground. We need to work on carbon and strengthen our sustainability offering further. We also have a strong technology capability that we need to grow."

