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RICS

THE PUBLIC SECTOR SURVEYOR IN THE RICS

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DAVID TUFFIN's early influences include his father's regular long absences due to Royal Navy postings, growing up on the infamous Paulsgrove housing estate and moving to Surrey aged 13 when parents divorced. Resulting benefits were entirely selfish, i.e. self-preservation, self-reliance, self-motivation and self-belief. David left school aged 16 and commenced a surveying course leading eventually to RICS final examinations.

Employment from 1966 included 12 months as a labourer on building sites, a 2-year stint as a trainee Building Control Officer, 2 years in a local authority Architect's Department, followed by 2 years at a small practice of Building Surveyors. A row with the boss over strategy and direction led to resignation and armed only with a wife, small baby and large mortgage, he became self-employed aged 25.

A large slice of luck, being joined by friends and former colleagues, John Ferraby and Mike Taylor, in 1974 and some hard work, led to steady growth. The practice of Tuffin Ferraby Taylor now has six offices and around 120 people, providing building consultancy and project management services to blue chip clients, both private and public sector, in the UK and Europe.

David Tuffin has been appointed RICS President-elect for the 2006/2007 session. He will assume the Presidency in July 2007. President of the Building Surveyors Division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in 1991/92, he is currently Chairman of RICS Council of England and Chairman of RICS Awards Working Party.

David provides expert witness services in the field of professional negligence litigation and building pathology. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Consultant Building Surveyors (ACBS) and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors.

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RICS

THE PUBLIC SECTOR SURVEYOR IN THE RICS

INTRODUCTION

I am RICS President-Elect. How I got here it is a long and tortuous story. Following pressure from your President the RICS agreed to sponsor this conference, so the Institution does care about its members in the public sector!

My background is local government. I started as a trainee building control officer at the London Borough of Merton several decades ago and then worked at Lambeth Council in the days before political interference spoiled what was a very progressive borough. I am still associated with local government as my practice does a lot of public sector work.

PUBLIC SECTOR ADVISORY GROUP

There are 12,500 RICS members working in the public sector and that is probably a conservative estimate. The purpose of the Public Sector Advisory Group is to ensure that public sector members are fairly represented throughout the Institution and particularly within Faculties and Forums. Public sector members should not hesitate to push the RICS to recognise their sector but do it in a positive way, not by grumbling from the sidelines. But pressure is a two-way street. When you push for representation in all RICS structures, and the Institution responds by making provision for representation, the public sector MUST make sure that those representative seats are taken up. Do not forget that any one of us can plead lack of time, an active career or looking after young families as a reason for not getting involved. The following are some of the key recommendations made by the Public Sector Advisory Group.

- The development of a public sector “online community”;
- Liaison with public sector professional groups and organisations;

- Delivery of, and participation in, high profile events, relevant to the public sector;
- Good practice and benchmarking.

ONLINE PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNITY

The Online Public Sector Community is a pilot for the development of many other online communities within RICS. Modern communications enable us to build systems that enable members to network together effectively and efficiently without the need to meet together in person. RICS Faculties and Forums has developed a high specification and user-friendly online tool in partnership with an organisation called INovem. The next step is to develop a more sophisticated system to enable high-level communications between members and then both public sector members and those who work closely with the public sector will be included in the community.

Initially the online community will be open only to RICS members but there is the later possibility of opening up to other disciplines and professions. Its purpose is to assist in the collection and dissemination of case studies and best practice. The Institution hopes that you will all participate in this new online community when it is set up hopefully later this year and whilst active participation in the online forums will obviously provide its own reward we see also as a means of lifelong learning and continuing professional development. Most members are now used to doing CPD. Initially there was resistance but it is something I still do as it makes me a better surveyor. The more clued up we are, the more we develop our own lifelong learning, the better we are able to service our clients.

Items on the online community will be cross-referenced

FIGURE 1

ONLINE PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNITY

- A high specification and user friendly online tool, created by INovem
- Membership will be self-selecting
- Assist in the collection and dissemination of case studies and best practice
- A means for lifelong learning and continuing professional development
- Cross-referenced with the main RICS Website
- We will link with ACES and other professional groups to link online communities and provide a hub of information.

with the main RICS website and vice-versa. Links will be established with ACES and other professional groups to link online communities and provide a hub of information.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION AND LIAISON

The RICS regards its relationship with ACES as extremely important. There are regular high-level meetings and practical mutual support on projects.

Arising from the Eagan Report on skills we are promoting, with the Academy for Sustainable Communities, TecRICS, the role of the chartered surveyor in the public sector and sustainable communities. By the way a communications group at RICS are looking for better name for this new category of membership and any suggestions are welcomed. In promoting the role of the chartered surveyor in the public sector we find that many people, including some prominent local authorities, do not understand the value of having chartered surveyors in their organisation to look after property. This is something we must collectively change.

The Institution is working with other organisations such as the Local Government Association, the Planning Inspectorate, IDeA, English Partnerships and the Valuation Office and others in developing relationships and putting together projects. It is early days yet but the pace will pick up. One of the reasons why it will speed up a bit is that the RICS is now beginning to climb out of the financial quagmire caused by Agenda for Change. Without getting too political I will explain my position. I was on General Council in 2000 and abstained from the Agenda for Change vote. This you might find puzzling as I had been on it for 13 or 14 years. I did not object to Change but only to the fact that the initiative had not been costed. The RICS subsequently paid the penalty and was running a deficit budget for about 3 years having had to overspend to achieve Agenda for

FIGURE 2

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION AND LIAISON

- ACES – high level meetings and practical mutual support on projects
- The Academy for Sustainable Communities
- Other organisations include:
 - Local Government Association
 - Planning Inspectorate
 - IDeA
 - English Partnerships
 - Valuation Office

Change. Fortunately thanks to the Brook Review we are now coming out of the other side with a much more dynamic organisation. More importantly we have now got the money, thanks to a recovered Stock Market and good management of funds at RICS, to generate income that gives us choices. So the soft-peddalling due to lack of resources is over, the position is changing and you will soon see an accelerated amount of work.

HIGH PROFILE PUBLIC SECTOR EVENTS

The links we are building with external organisations will enable us to work with them to produce, promote, and participate in, high profile public sector events. For example the RICS is putting on a public sector conference in Spring 2007 and we will be looking to ACES and other organisations to actively contribute support. I mentioned support earlier. The RICS can do things but unless you help, as the experts in the public sector, we will not get far. It will be a cross-faculty conference and will showcase the work and expertise of RICS members in all sectors. There are some unenlightened client organisations out there. One authority is currently demoting the RICS qualification from professional down to a level of technical. This is not just a question of nomenclature; along with this sort of change comes diminished salary structure, status and credibility. I am pleased to see that the representation that you have got throughout the UK in convincing your own employers of the value of having a chartered surveyor looking after their biggest assets. The RICS can help but

FIGURE 3

HIGH PROFILE PUBLIC SECTOR EVENTS

- The links we are building with external organisations will enable us to work with them to produce, promote, and participate in, high profile public sector events.
- Spring RICS-wide Public Sector Conference
- RICS-wide Energy Conference in June
- Other events with DCLG and others

is not a trade union able to advocate specific cases.

In June 2007 the RICS-wide Energy Conference will report on progress achieved one year on from the Energy Review the RICS did last year. This will involve members from all sectors and all specialities. The RICS participated in the Urban Summit 2002 and the Sustainable Communities Summit 2005. The next event was planned for 2007 but has been shelved due to shifting government priorities. Other events are to be planned with DCLG.

GOOD PRACTICE AND BENCHMARKING

The Commercial Property Faculty has been active in producing guidelines, due end of 2006, for both private and public sector asset management. Thereafter the RICS will be seeking to organise courses and training and networking events to enable all members to share best practice. At the request of the Valuation Office,

FIGURE 4

GOOD PRACTICE AND BENCHMARKING

- Asset Management Guidelines
- Valuation Information Paper on Development Appraisal
- Statements of Community Involvement Information Paper and Roadshow

RICS Planning and Development Faculty and Valuation Faculty will jointly release a valuation information paper on development appraisal in line with the current reforms coming out of the Barker Review; another important milestone. The Planning and Development Faculty has almost completed an information paper on Statements of Community Involvement to be followed by a series of regional events in the form of road shows co-sponsored by the RTPi to promote cross-sector working. All are more examples of good practice and benchmarking and mutual assistance.

THE FUTURE

All the above examples are just the beginning. The RICS does not see this as an exercise that it can safely leave others to continue. We intend to continue with public sector members as there are so many of you and you are extremely influential. I am looking forward to working with ACES and similar bodies to deliver the services and support that you need. The RICS is committed to raising the profile of the public sector surveyor and if we do it well with your help we enhance the status of the whole profession.

Recruitment now is an issue that touches all of us. The shortage of qualified surveyors that local government has been experiencing over many years is now the situation throughout the profession. Private sector conditions and pay packages have always made it difficult for the public sector to attract the right candidates. Well it is worse than that now; there is just nobody out there. Recruitment agencies are the only people that are benefiting from the current shortage. All professions are fishing in the same

pond for the available talent. One of the things that RICS, and my own practice, has done is to try to encourage a wider portal for potential members to get into RICS. That is through some of the courses which are regarded maybe as old fashioned now, HNC/HND in the more technical end, because now there are bridges through to full RICS qualification. There was a recent eight-page spread on surveying in the Independent aimed specifically at trying to get an advantage over other professions who are looking at the same potential members as we are. It did not cost a great deal apart from a few hours effort and a little bit of money to do this and it is something again which the public sector can do. Why is this only private sector? The reason is because the private sector did something about it. If resources are tight the ACES should think about working with RICS to produce something similar.

The public sector is a brilliant place to train. I certainly benefited from it. We need to ensure everyone knows this. The advantage in helping each other do this is that the more people come into the profession the better we can service our clients. If we have got good responsible clients they are happy to pay high fees. I got a little bit of stick recently for an article in the Building Surveying Journal saying, "Charge your clients more". Certainly some of my clients looked concerned and I said, "You are a good client, you will pay for quality", and if we keep on undercutting our fees it does not say quality to clients. Lawyers don't do it. Why do we do it? Bigger fees mean more slack in the system to train young people properly and to equip them with the skills to provide better service. It is a virtuous circle. We need to keep the money in the system. Every time I recruit a surveyor through a recruitment agency it costs me between six and ten thousand pounds. That is their fee 17½% of first year salary. That goes from me to them. If the surveyor leaves in the first week I get most of it back. If they leave in the first month or they do not make their probationary period because they are unsatisfactory, I get a small percentage back. After about eight weeks the terms and conditions mean that it has all gone. It is dead money. We should keep that £10,000 in the system because I can pay recruits more money, equip them better and it is within the system. The way to do that is to sidestep recruitment agencies; easily said I know. But one of the things that I pushed for a couple of years ago, now online, is the RICS website page for recruitment. There are something like 700 jobs on that at the moment, both advertisements from employers requiring people and from people requiring jobs, a kind of open forum. Look at that website when your authority wants to recruit, it does not cost much. It's much cheaper than putting a full page in the Building Magazine or Estates Gazette. It is very cost-effective.

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