

Chairman's Introduction

More Than Just A Badge - For Another 25 Years!

2009 heralds the 25th Anniversary of the Lead Contractors Association, a period of longevity which many thought would be beyond us when our members first brought the LCA and its unique "lead man" logo into the construction industry in 1984.

Whilst it's nice to be able to look back, having proven our critics wrong, there is no doubt that it is with the present and the immediate future with which our members are most concerned.

Much has been achieved so far and must be maintained over the next 25 years, but what further objectives should we strive to achieve for the benefit of our members and our industry?

The recognition and ongoing pursuit of Quality Standards remains sacrosanct and we must continue to provide specialist lead worker training via our Gold and Silver Courses. We must endeavour to assist all members of the Construction Professional Team with the ongoing development of their technical awareness and understanding of the capabilities of lead as a material within the construction industry and we must persist with our lobbying of various organisations, including Government Departments in the promotion and use of LCA Members on all Historic and Listed Buildings.

Further objectives are perhaps more difficult to identify, given what has been achieved so far.

However, I consider the enlistment into the LCA of more contractors who work with lead as a high priority, so that we can monitor and improve standards of workmanship under our constitution. I believe this should be part of our initiative for Government and industry acceptance that leadwork is a craft and should only be installed by experienced craftsmen who are Members of the LCA.

I am proud to look around the current LCA Council and consider the wealth of knowledge and experience available to our members and the industry for the foreseeable future. We are very fortunate that two of the original 1984 Council Members are still involved at council level, demonstrating their continued commitment and enthusiasm for not only our association, but more importantly the ancient craft of leadwork.

As far as our immediate challenges are concerned, we can all claim to be innocent victims of the economic downturn that has impacted so severely on the UK construction market place, but this is not the first time this has happened and we must positively address the challenges we face.

Not for the first time, quality standards will be under threat, with bottom line driven choices being made by Clients, Architects and Contractors alike, ultimately resulting in the unwary client finding out to their cost that "price cutting initiative" actually means "corner cutting expediency".

It is therefore critical to ensure that where leadwork being installed, it is being done properly, which is the purpose of the LCA vetting programme, but who is checking the leadwork installed by those who are not members of the LCA? How does a client know they are dealing with a current member of the LCA in the first place?

When a contractor is approved for membership of the LCA, as part of the formal recognition as a leadwork specialist, they are granted the right to use the Association logo - the "lead man" specifically designed for us by Donald Dewar-Mills - to advertise their achievement and promote their quality standard.

Our Members are urged to be proud of their membership and display the logo as an important public declaration that they are contractors that not only have the knowledge and skill to work to the current Code of Practice but also have the confidence to guarantee work for 25 years.

When membership is withdrawn, the right to use the "lead man" is also immediately withdrawn.

So in closing my message for this year, I would emphasise that the LCA logo identifies a vetted and approved Specialist Leadwork Craftsman and is therefore much more than another construction industry badge - so remember the 'Lead Man' and all that it represents !