

Letter to the Guardian

28 February 2006

Dear Sir

'What a load of rubbish', is the football related response to John Crace's article which lays the blame for the lateness and cost overruns of the Wembley stadium project firmly at the door of quantity surveyors (QS) ('Who'd be a Quantity Surveyor', Work, Saturday Guardian 25.02.06)

In fact, experience shows that the appointment of a professionally qualified quantity surveyor/project manager is essential if a client wants to deliver a construction project within plus or minus 5% of the construction programme and the cost budget.

The most common causes of overruns are the client changing their mind, an incomplete brief and failures of corporate governance such as aggressively under bidding for a job that is perceived as strategically important to a company's development.

The best projects are ones where the clients and contractors work together towards universally understood objectives. Inevitably, good communication and leadership are paramount here. On these projects, the QS is able to keep time and cost within acceptable parameters, adding huge value to the undertaking and minimising unnecessary risk.

There are massive projects like the 2012 Olympics and Crossrail on the horizon. The skills of quantity surveyors and project managers have never been more important to successful delivery.

Ed Badke

RICS, director for construction and the built environment.

Steve Barker, senior partner, RLF

"I was shocked to read one journalist's take on quantity surveying in the Guardian at the weekend. I was interested to note, however, that the article did not seem to be based on any real knowledge of the industry, or on solid facts.

“There’s no doubt about it, quantity surveying is a challenging job, and one that is subject to constant change. Social, economic and legislation changes all mean that the situation you were faced with at the start of a project can have been turned on its head two years down the line. While this can make things difficult, it is what ultimately makes the job so rewarding.

“There will always be factors that are out of our control. Who could have predicted the tragic events of 9,11, for example, and the affect that it would then have on the security measures needed for the Scottish Parliament project? New legislation is coming in all the time that alters the direction of a project, such as the 10% renewables element that must now be taken into account. At the end of the day, though, despite all this, the figures speak for themselves: nearly 70% of projects were completed on or under the budget committed to by the client, according to the latest Government statistics published by Constructing Excellence. This is a very positive figure – and a far cry from the regular 50% overspend suggested by the article.”