Top-Down, Top Guidance

The UK's 2008 National Federation of Demolition Contractors Convention in Palma, Majorca marks the launch of the Federation's most ambitious and comprehensive guidance notes to date. Co-authors of the guidance notes Mark Anthony and John Woodward provide a preview of the new publication.

Back in 1991, Allied Forces were embroiled in the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein in Iraq, there was a President Bush in the White House, and in Staines, UK, finishing touches had been made to a set of guidance notes on the deconstruction of tower blocks.

Seventeen years later, Saddam may be gone, but US and UK forces are still in Iraq; there's another Bush in the White House; and the new edition of the NFDC's Guidance on the Deconstruction of High Rise Structures has just been completed.

Two Decades of Change

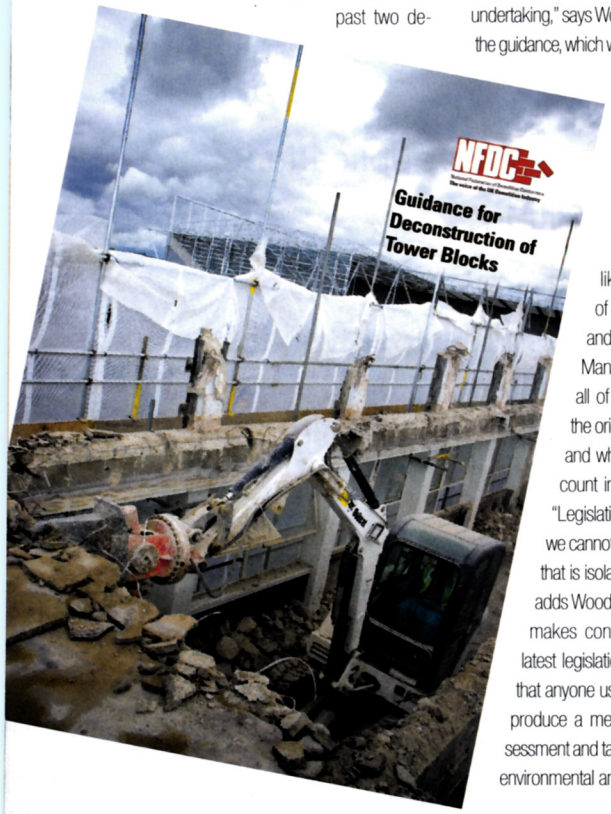
Yet while things seemingly remain unchanged in US politics and international policy, the new set of guidance notes is a markedly different animal. "It is a testament to the original document that it was still in daily use 17 years after it was written," says co-author of the new edition John Woodward. "But when we looked at it, it really polarised just how much our industry had changed in the past two decades."

For one thing, the previous document made regular references to both high-balling and explosive techniques. "Obviously, explosive techniques are still utilised and have become far more specialised over the interceding years and their use is largely restricted to specific applications, so we decided that it would be best to look at those in a separate guidance," says Woodward. "In addition, while high-balling was a highly productive and efficient demolition method, it has been largely consigned to the industry history books. So we have focused primarily upon floor-by-floor or 'top-down' methods this time around."

The resulting document, produced by an NFDC working committee involving Woodward, NFDC chief executive officer Howard Button, Tilley & Barrett's Paul Brown and Demolition & Dismantling magazine editor Mark Anthony, is the Federation's most ambitious and comprehensive set of guidance notes to date.

Safe Working Practices

"The process of floor-by-floor deconstruction is a complex one and, as we were determined to define safe working practices and acceptable levels of control for all stages of the process, we knew from the outset that this publication would be a massive undertaking," says Woodward. "Even the scope of the guidance, which we finally set at structures of 18 m and above, was the source of a great deal of discussion because, once again, the goalposts have moved somewhat since the previous edition was published."



Woodward cites legislation like BS6187:2000, Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 and the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2007, all of which were introduced after the original guidance was published, and which had to be taken into account in the writing of the new one. "Legislation is constantly changing, but we cannot just ignore it or offer guidance that is isolated from current regulations," adds Woodward. "So the new guidance makes constant reference to the very latest legislation and offers specific advice that anyone using the guidance should also produce a method statement and risk assessment and take into account prevailing site, environmental and regulatory conditions."

Heavily Regulated

In some ways, the degree to which legislation, planning and control are covered, further highlights the way in which the industry has developed during the past two decades. Before the guidance makes any specific recommendations on demolition and deconstruction methods, the co-authors spent five pages covering subjects, including roles and responsibilities; safety legislation, management procedures; and project planning and notifications. "Today's demolition contractor must abide by a huge and growing number of rules and regulations before they even set foot onto a site," says Woodward. "As one of the primary aims of the new guidance was safety, it was vital that we took all of this into account. But it did highlight just how heavily regulated this industry has become."

Scaffold & Protection

Another key element of the new guidance is the subject of scaffolding and protection, a vital consideration in almost all floor-by-floor deconstruction projects. The new publication recommends that all scaffold should be designed by competent and qualified scaffold designers who will provide scaffold drawings and calculations. It further recommends that the design incorporates suitable and sufficient ties back to the main structure in accordance with BS5973. "Experience has shown that for demolition scaffold, more scaffold ties than recommended in BS5973 should be provided to ensure that the scaffold will always have sufficient ties as the scaffold is dismantled with the demolition," saysWoodward.

Daily Assistance

Woodward says that the new guidance will be previewed at the 2008 NFDC Convention in Palma, Majorca with the full launch to NFDC members following immediately afterwards. "It is two years since the NFDC's guidance on the use of high reach excavators was introduced. That publication has been distributed across the US and Europe, has been translated into French and has recently been reprinted for the second time," says Woodward. "Given the universal use of floor-by-floor techniques, we expect a similar level of demand for the new guidance."

Although the new guidance is likely to achieve international recognition, Woodward says that it is aimed primarily at helping NFDC members in their day to day business, and that the publication was produced with the assistance of members across the UK. "This new set of guidance notes is a perfect example of the NFDC working with and for its members," says Woodward. "During the research for this guidance, the working committee spoke to members in all five regions of the Federation to gain their expert opinion and input. And the production of the guidance has been partially sponsored by associate members JCB and Sandvik Mining and Construction," adds Woodward. "The result is a guidance that the Federation can be rightly proud and which will be of daily help to member companies and their employees."

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Still time for 2009 IACDS Diamond Award entries

For those of you that have not yet sent in your entries to the 2009 IACDS Diamond Award, but would like to contribute still have time up to the 31 October 2008. The Diamond Award is an internationally recognized competition for concrete sawing and drilling industries. This special award for outstanding results in concrete sawing and drilling jobs will be awarded during World of Concrete, 3-6 February, 2009 in Las Vegas. 2009 Diamond Award is sponsored by the various membering asociations in IACDS as well as suppliers like Diamond Products, Hilti, Husqvarna, Hydro Tec, Nestag and Saint Gobain. "Don't miss out on your chance to win this prestigious award which can bring heightened awareness and international recognition to your company name. Should your entry be successful, and you are chosen as one of the three winners, you will recieve roundtrip air travel and hotel for two persons for three nights for free," says IACDS Secretary Daniel Trachsel.

The winners and their entries will be presented during a press conference at World of Concrete in Las Vegas, USA on 4 February, 2009. The Diamond Award Entry Form can be downloaded at www.iacds.org/diamondaward.

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