



# STEPHEN LISK PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

## “Adapt to Change”

“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change”  
*Stephen Hawking*

8 May 2018

## **CIBSE Stephen Lisk Presidential Address - “Adapt to Change”**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am extremely honoured to serve as CIBSE President. I would like to begin by thanking Peter Wong for his leadership, and for his contribution to the work of the Institution over the past year.

Tonight, I want to focus on the contribution that CIBSE members make – your knowledge, your experience, your skills, your competence – and your capacity to make people’s lives better.

### **A changing world**

I’d like to start by taking you back to 1997 to Scots Valley California. Two American software engineers, Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, set out to change how people enjoy movies at home.

They create a membership film rental business that starts out delivering DVDs to their customers, but in 2011 with a change in technology allowing for faster internet speeds, they ‘adapt’ their business model to streaming video online.

Their innovation is called Netflix.

Today Netflix’s has 125 million subscribers worldwide, with annual revenues of over £8.5 billion pounds - rivalling traditional studios with its new content creation and fundamentally changing the way we expect “entertainment” content to be provided.

This is something twenty or thirty years ago we could not have imagined.

Today, such technological innovations are rapidly changing the way we live and work, allowing us to conduct virtual business meetings, switch on or off the lighting as we drive home, and manage our bank account on our phones.

With an OECD report this year forecasting that 14% of jobs currently managed by humans could soon be carried out by robots, further transformation of our working lives and of our workplaces is on the horizon.

Change is not only coming from technological disruptors.

We continue to see and experience negative consequences from our own impact on the environment, an environment we share.

Last year global energy related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions rose to a historic high of 32.5 gigatonnes.

In the same year the cost of climate related disasters – such as hurricanes, monsoons, floods and drought - hit a record level of more than £200 billion pounds.

But, what happens if a major disruption fails?

If Netflix fails, we go back to buying our ticket at the cinema, or we switch providers.

But we can't switch our planet.

We must continue to adapt and look to mitigate the future impacts - awareness, education, and innovation being the key drivers.

As well as this technological and environmental change, we are living in an era of political and economic shifts, with nations re-asserting their relationships, particularly the United Kingdom as it approaches Brexit.

There is economic pressure on the construction sector, both in the UK and more widely.

The recent publication of the government's plans for transforming construction, make it very clear that our customers – and the government is our biggest customer – want to see transformative change in the performance of our industry.

And they are echoing the wider global call set out by the World Economic Forum working group on construction engineering, for the transformation of our sector.

As we all know, construction is a large complex supply chain that creates large complex buildings, making disruptive and rapid innovation difficult.

Industry wide collaboration provides the opportunity to share the value of innovation across the supply chain.

### **Regulatory change**

We truly are living through a time of dramatic change.

We can do little to prevent change, but where there are negative consequences we should learn from them, respond to them and help to shape a better future.

And it is absolutely essential that is what we do, following last summer's tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London, where 71 lives were lost, and 70 people injured.

As built environment professionals, we all have a responsibility to ensure that the lessons from the fire are learned, and we must do all within our power to ensure that they are acted upon.

Dame Judith Hackett's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety has identified several areas where change is needed.

These include regulations and guidance, roles and responsibilities, standards, procurement and competence.

Dame Judith recognised the need for the original design intent to be preserved, recorded, and for any changes go through a formal review process involving people who are competent and who understand the key features of the design.

That information needs to be kept up to date through construction and handed over to those who will operate the building - preserving the "golden thread" of building information from construction into the operational life of the building.

CIBSE responded to the review's call for evidence, with detailed input from The Society of Façade Engineering, whilst also supporting the responses from the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Construction Industry Council.

Following the publication of Dame Judith's Interim Report, the expertise of CIBSE and its members has been applied to support the continuing review, in a

wholehearted effort to shape a better future for those who live in multi-storey buildings.

It is clear that construction in the UK must change, and as a charitable body that exists for the public benefit, we are committed to being at the forefront of delivering that change.

Our members have the power to make a positive and significant impact.

Everything that we do can make the built environment better – whether through the products we make, the projects we design, the buildings we manage, operate, maintain and refurbish, the codes and guidance we write, or the standards and regulations we contribute to and help to improve.

I am not only talking about the big budget landmark developments but also the every day - the housing schemes and other smaller projects that have a significant local impact.

These are also the projects that contribute to cutting carbon emissions in the built environment, cuts that are essential in our response to our changing environment.

### **Changing Competency**

All of our collective experience and knowledge contributes to CIBSE's standing as a globally recognised force for good.

Our contribution helps to build, maintain and continuously develop competency.

We each develop our individual knowledge through the work we do. We exchange and share ideas and experiences with those in our regions, special

interest groups, societies, at the Technical Symposium and Build2Perform Live, in the CIBSE Journal and even wider through collaborative industry events.

We can then feed that learning into developing new CIBSE guidance which is disseminated via webinars, training, and fed into local and national government via consultations.

This, in time, leads to the guidance being reviewed and further improved, adding to knowledge across the industry. And so it goes on, a virtuous cycle of competency with CIBSE volunteers and members at its core. Each contributing to making the places we live, work and play better.

CIBSE's strength comes from its 21,000 members, in 16 regions of the UK, 4 overseas regions in more than 100 countries around the world. It has active communities around disciplines, including our societies.

There is the Society of Light and Lighting – of which I am proud to be a Fellow and Past President – as well as Societies covering public health, local exhaust ventilation, facades, and most recently digital engineering. CIBSE's 24 special interest groups collectively boast some 13,000 members, over half of whom are not CIBSE members but want to participate in the networking and knowledge sharing that those Groups offer. Our Young Engineers Network, is an inspiring example of young engineers being supported to engage more closely with our professional institution early in their careers.

## **A changing CIBSE**

CIBSE continues to develop new and different ways of engaging with its members and with the broader industry, to reflect their needs.

Our inaugural Build2PerformLive event, which took place at London's Olympia last November, significantly extended our reach, with over 1400 visitors, many of them not CIBSE members, and featuring 170 speakers. It was truly a formidable achievement.

Another CIBSE innovation is our Knowledge Portal, which has brought our wealth of guidance online. This initiative recognises the need to deliver knowledge digitally to ensure it remains accessible to our members and the industry globally into the future.

It has an important role in delivering CIBSE's best practice guidance to the broadest possible audience.

I think it is important to remember, that CIBSE was the first Professional Engineering Institution to make its guidance available to all members, online, as a benefit of membership.

We cannot stand still. The world of professional engineering institutions is itself changing, following John Uff QC's sector review last year.

That review identified the 'lost three million', the three million people working in engineering who had no association with professional engineering institutions.

It is clear that engineering institutions like CIBSE must continuously work to ensure relevance and to maintain and grow their reach. That is one reason why we offer participation in our Groups to non-members, to raise awareness of our work more widely.

Some of CIBSE's changes are long overdue. I am delighted that my successor will be CIBSE's first woman President - Professor Lynne Jack, director of Heriot-Watt University's Royal Academy of Engineering Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Design.

I look forward to working with Lynne in the coming year.

I believe the diversity of opinion is an essential part of reaching agreement for collaborative action, aligned to a common set of values. We make the most progress by including and respecting different opinions, and I welcome the re-established and renamed CIBSE Inclusivity Panel, to monitor, advise and ensure that the work of all inspirational people is properly recognised.

Despite being established just under a year ago, the Inclusivity Panel have made significant progress.

Inclusion and diversity go hand in hand, setting goals to treat people fairly and making organisations more representative of the communities they serve.

**Call to arms**

My own journey at CIBSE started 30 years ago with a battered CIBSE Lighting Guide on my desk in Auckland.

Being a passionate lighter, I joined the Illuminating Engineering Society in New Zealand, and when we immigrated to the United Kingdom, I started to volunteer with the Society of Light and Lighting.

But thinking back, I needed someone to reach out and ask me to get involved - and tonight I am doing the same. I am asking for your help. I want to encourage even more CIBSE members and others, to bring their enthusiasm and knowledge and get involved with our community of volunteers.

It might be asking someone in your office, your Region, your Group or Society to input into a guide, help with an event, or simply come along to an event for the first time.

My journey with CIBSE is just one story in the rich history of our institution, and I look forward to hearing more of yours in the coming year.

So in closing, I would like to thank you, thank you for your passion, your energy and for your most precious gift, your time. Thank you for inspiring me. You continue to change people's lives, and in doing so, enrich your own.

Thank you.