

Materials UK – Construction Working Group

Notes from first meeting of Construction Working Group (CWG) of MatUK 29th September 2006 at Construction Products Association's offices

Attendees

Philip Ramsey, Pilkington	Glass (Chair)
Denzil Spencer, Ibstock	Ceramics
John Davenport, TWI	Composites
Cliff Fudge, H+H Celcon	Concrete
Mark Walton, Corus	Metals
Tim Broyd, CIRIA	Research
Graham Couchman, BRE	Research
John Brumwell, DTI	Observer
John Tebbit, Construction Products Association	Secretary

1. Welcome and introductions

PR welcomed everyone and noted apologies. The unfortunate lack of a plastics sector representative was noted and if possible this should be resolved for the next meeting.

2. Background

PR outlined the history of the DTI Innovation and Growth Teams that had led to the Materials UK initiative. Full details can be found at www.matuk.co.uk. The Construction Working Group (CWG) will have a 2 year life. He proposed that the current team should act as a strategic steering group with sector specific work being carried out by sub groups. He saw the end result as a coherent vision of where a truly World Class UK Construction Industry should be in 10 to 20 years together with a road map of how to get there, with an emphasis on the materials issues.

3. The way forward

There was general agreement that the group should be mindful of the many recently completed or on-going visioning exercises. It should review them and decide whether to use the results of these as a starting point to identify materials and product gaps, or whether it is necessary to formulate our own vision more directly related to materials issues.

The group listed the various issues it felt were likely to be important for the construction industry over the next two decades which have a clear link to materials:

- Sustainability – although given the disagreements on what it actually meant and some reluctance to make reference to the 'S word', there was a view that Overall Environmental Impact may be a better subject to focus on, particularly as this would include energy usage which is a major cost driver for all the materials sectors.
- Globalisation

- Energy – both security of supply and efficiency
- Health and safety
- Off Site Manufacture
- Composites and deconstruction
- Materials combinations, hybrid solutions and flexibility

The European Construction Technology Platform (<http://www.ectp.org/>) was mentioned with its three themes of:

- Resource consumption
- Process and production
- ICT and communications

A copy of the ECTP's Materials Vision is attached.

JD referred to the drafted composites roadmap, which he will circulate when ready.

Some of the material sectors are also looking at the future in their KTNs.

The point was made that any vision needs to have clear targets and measures (KPIs).

There was some discussion about the timescale of the vision. Short-term incremental improvements are already being driven by business needs and budgets. The roadmap can include different timescales in parallel, but some emphasis should be given to stretch targets which should lead to the identification of major material-related gaps and requirements for scientific research in academia.

The point was made that the UK has an excellent academic reputation, but research in construction materials such as ceramics and glass has reduced in recent years. Cross-sector centres of excellence are important for industry and should be considered by the CWG.

It was felt that any vision had to be rooted in meeting the regulations and standards that governed construction, although consideration should also be given to changes in regulations that might remove barriers to progress towards the vision.

Funding is another important issue. EPSRC has a £20m programme on Sustainable Urban Spaces and with the Carbon Trust has another £14m on Carbon visions. Members suggested that reducing the environmental impact of building fabric could be a 'fundable' area of work. It was agreed that JT would meet with TB to discuss funding mechanisms further. Meeting arranged for October 19th at CIRIA's offices.

PR summed up by asking that everyone send what details they had on existing research and 'road maps' to JT to correlate and that they begin to consider issues related to 'overall environmental impact' in their sectors.

4. Actions and timetable

1. JT to contact suitable people from the plastics community to encourage at least one to attend the next meeting.
2. JT to discuss with Nick Morgan of DTI to understand administrative issues of MatUK
3. JT to look for data on end use of materials e.g. for buildings, infrastructure
4. JT to meet with TB to discuss current and potential future funding mechanisms
5. PR to discuss remit with other MatUK WG chairmen to ensure no overlaps or omissions
6. JD to send JT the Composites Network road map when ready
7. Members to send in information on research and/or road maps on their sectors to JT

The next meeting was fixed for Friday 12th January at Construction Products Association's offices, starting at 10.00 and finishing at 12.30 with a sandwich lunch.

John Tebbit
6th October 2006