

CIC Acceptance Speech: Nick Raynsford MP
8 June 2005

Can I first of all say how delighted I am to be here today and how very honoured I feel to have been elected to serve as Deputy Chairman of the Construction Industry Council.

Those who are engaged in the world of politics are well used to elections, so it came as a very pleasant surprise to be able to give an acceptance speech without the normal preliminaries of four to six weeks of frantic campaigning, knocking and breaking thousands of doors, being the butt of attacks from ones opponents, and abuse for unsympathetic and barks or snarls from over-zealous guard-dogs.

Elections and the true nail-biting powers of watching votes being counted to see if one has gone through or not. The contrast between May 5th and June 8th 2005 could not be more stark and welcome.

On a more serious note, I am really very touched by the immensely warm welcome I have received from you today and those who on your behalf discussed this option with me over the last month. After an absence of 4 years from direct involvement with the construction industry, I really do believe a sense of being welcomed home – and I just hope that I can live up to your hopes and expectations.

From my discussions with Graham, Stuart and others in the past few months it is clear to me that some of the issues with which I was very much pre-occupied when I was Construction Minister remain big priorities today. We still have much ground to cover if we all realise our ambitions which have been articulated so often in the past by the CIC and others for a greater sense of unity and common purpose within the construction industry. Breaking down the barrier to close collaborative working, and ensuring that the vision spelt out in Michael Latham's report "*Constructing the Team*" a decade ago and John Egan "*Rethinking Construction*" more than half a decade ago is realised, is in my view fundamental to the long-term health and success of the construction industry, and I certainly see this as a crucial priority for the coming years.

But while some agenda items are very familiar, I am equally conscious that other things have changed in the course of the past few years, and have to face a steep learning curve in the months ahead to catch up on new developments, and emerging priorities.

I hope that Stuart will forgive me for not being able to bring him the level of detailed expertise which an incoming Deputy Chairman would normally be able to offer. However, I hope that he and other members of the Council will be patient if I have to ask a lot of detailed questions in the coming months to bring me up to speed. It is certainly my intention to work closely at Stuart and colleagues to further the interests of the CIC.

This is not the occasion for a long speech you will be relieved to hear, nor for a 'tour d'horizon' about the industry and the context in which it is moving. But I cannot resist two observations which seem to me to reflect some of the key challenges and opportunities of our time.

But come from my perspective as a Thames Gateway MP. Seeing the scale of the development opportunity which we currently face and scope for transformational change led by high quality urban development, as well as what good and bad examples of what has been achieved to date, I am constantly struck by the immense responsibilities which our generation has to make a success of their historic opportunities. I have often commented that from the time in the late 17th Century when symbolically the monarchy abandoned the former royal palace in Greenwich and moved to Hampton Court, London and the South East of England have suffered from a serious problem of imbalance with all the advantages concentrated to the heart of the capital, leaving the East of London and the Thames estuary with most of the problems and disadvantages. Turning that round is a once in a Twentieth century opportunity and we mustn't miss the boat.

The second observation is that if we are to convince a sceptical public that new development should be welcomed and not seen as a threat – particularly in the context of an increasingly strident MMBY lobby, then the quality of our new buildings, and the way they are planned to enhance rather than damage the environment is going to be vital. Against that background I am very excited by the work which CIC has been undertaking to develop and apply Design Quality Indicators as an integral part of the design and construction process. Raising the quality of design and the quality of the built environment is a cause to which we should be unequivocally committed.

So we face some hugely important challenges in the coming year, and I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to work with you and to advance our common agenda and the influence and standing of the CIC.

It is a very real honour to take on the post as Deputy Chairman and I do so with some trepidation and with a great sense of enthusiasm and excitement.

Thank you all for the confidence you have expressed in me to discharge these responsibilities.

The Rt. Hon. Nick Raynsford.