

CHANGING HANDS AT THE NDTG

With the transfer of governance of the NDTG this February, incoming Chairman and Vice Chairman, Craig MacWilliam and Simon Barlow spoke with Demolition Hub about their passion for education and training and how they came to be in positions of leadership, with comment from outgoing Chairman, David Darsey.

David Darsey

“For more than 40 years, NDTG has led the way in workforce development and training standards for the demolition industry. Having the opportunity to help steer such an important organisation is both a privilege and a responsibility. I have very much enjoyed my two-year term in the role of NDTG Chairman and now pass the mantle to Craig MacWilliam, of MacWilliam Demolition, with my best wishes for success during his tenure.”



THE INTERVIEW

Craig MacWilliam - Incoming Chairman



Demolition Hub: How has your personal experience influenced your path in training and leadership?

Craig MacWilliam: When I started out in the industry there was a lot less training and qualifications available for operatives and very few qualifications were mandatory to work on site. Within my first few months of work I attended CITB courses on a range of demolition activities.

Around 15 years ago, I became the Chair of the Scottish Region of the NFDC and it was then that I became a lot more aware of activities of the NDTG and how valuable training and qualifications were to companies and owners, as well as the employees.

With the influence of others around me, I enrolled in the demolition supervisor course and sat the exam for the IDE. Having passed these, I have always been keen to progress my learning and encourage others to do so also.

Demolition Hub: What's your pitch to those who feel, "school wasn't for me"?

Craig MacWilliam: This is something I find quite often. I explain that it's not just about making them do the job more safely and efficiently. They can either progress within my company, or if they do leave for whatever reason, they will have a chance to get a better job in another company, or even progress outside the industry.

You can be highly intelligent, but without the right guidance you can end up leaving school without qualifications. These are the guys who benefit most of all from on-site training and qualifications.

The two-year demolition apprentice course gets them just about every piece of training relevant to the industry. And it's quite well grant funded.

There are so many qualifications you can take to another industry – MEWPS, manual handling, fire marsh and first aid ticket, telehandler ticket,

scissor lift ticket. You take the course, get paid your wage and at the end get a qualification. At MacWilliam Demolition, every time there's a new course there's always somebody who wants to be on it.

Demolition Hub: How do you rate academic degrees in demolition?

Craig MacWilliam: I think that it's fantastic for the industry (the University of Wolverhampton MSc in Demolition Management). Anyone who has got a degree, plus on-site training is going to have a huge advantage when they have been in the industry for two or three years. I wish it had been about when I started. I'd have liked to have left school, done the degree and then entered the family business.

Demolition Hub: How will COVID affect training and retraining in demolition during your term?

Craig MacWilliam: It is difficult to predict how busy the industry will be over the next two years. Many companies have experienced a downturn in work in 2020, which could result in an extremely busy period when the COVID restrictions are eased. This could mean that companies will be required to recruit new personnel

and the training group will be ready to provide foundation training.

My main goal over the next two years is to make sure that we can provide whatever training is needed for the industry, whether it's in-house or through a third party.

Demolition Hub: What makes you tick outside of demolition?

Craig MacWilliam: There are a few things that I would like to do that involve cycling. I race time trials all over the UK; I race cyclocross all over Scotland and the north of England; and I compete long distance cycling across Europe. I spent most of last summer in the Lake District and Northumbria doing the 50 mile time trial series, and I race off road in the winter. I absolutely love it.

One thing that's definitely on my bucket list is Mont Ventoux six times in one day, a mountain that's part of the Tour de France. The first challenge is to cycle up it three times in one day, following the three different routes. I did it a few years ago; now I want to do the challenge twice in one day. That's 32,000 feet of climbing – the height of Everest – and 180 miles' distance. I'd also like to cycle across Europe when (if) I retire, from Portugal to Turkey or Russia.



Rye Demolition's Simon Barlow only vacates the Chair for NFDC's London & Southern Counties region in March this year, yet already throws his (hard) hat into the ring for the Vice Chairman's position at NDTG. Here's why.

Simon Barlow - Incoming Vice Chairman

I'm delighted to be taking on this role with the National Demolition Training Group. Training is fundamental to the success of the industry and ensuring we continuously develop high standards of competence. It also makes a real difference to individuals, their lives, careers and families – and that is something I'm passionate about.

I believe robust training practices are vital if we are to ensure safe and healthy places of work, a positive impact on society and expertly executed projects. There is a breadth of training we need to be looking at across the industry, which I encourage all demolition organisations to explore. From technical health and safety to technical competence through the CCDO card scheme, all areas are vital to developing our teams.

We need to have a health and safety mindset. If our teams consider the impact of poor practice and how important it is to 'live' positive behaviours, we will continue to enhance our record as an industry. Practical elements alone are not enough and the NFDC is soon to embark on a Behavioural Safety initiative that marries the compliance aspects of safety with the personal side.

We know the government now recognises the need to promote

careers and development beyond academia. The recent drive to increase apprenticeships is both welcome and a real opportunity for us all and we should all be looking to take advantage of the apprenticeship levy.

Traditionally, demolition may not have been seen as an appealing choice for graduates, but we are making inroads in changing the perception of working in the industry. There is an opportunity to bring in new talent with different experiences – not just on site, but in the back office too.

Organisations thrive with people of different backgrounds and different ideas. With strong career development plans, providing relevant access to jobs and training and inclusive cultures, we can attract a broad range of personnel to our ranks. At Rye we are keen to employ apprentices, ex-forces and ex-offenders and help them develop a career in the industry. The support provided by the NDTG can play a significant part in that for all demolition organisations.

I know many of the team at the NDTG already and am really looking forward to working with them, with Craig and demolition organisations across the industry. I encourage people to reach out to me and share their thoughts, ideas and suggestions.