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Introduction
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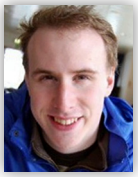
Introduction



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Welcome to the November special issue of *Civil Engineering*, entitled *From research to practice*. I have long suspected that most of the innovation within our profession passes from the brains of engineers to the bottom line of balance sheets with little celebration or publicity. But it is this precious movement from mind to matter that matters to be minded, so I am delighted we are promoting it in *Civil Engineering*.

We kick off the issue with the development of a new composite flooring system installed in the iconic Leadenhall building in central London, UK (Stehle *et al*., 2015). If you stand on Fleet Street and look towards the east, you will be faced with one of the most iconic views in London; that of the spires of the Guild Church of St Martin and St Dunstan's Chapel framed against the Dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The view has remained largely unchanged for over three centuries. The wedge design of the Leadenhall building, which required the novel composite flooring detailed in the paper, was created to extract as much floor space as possible from site with minimal impingement on the famous skyline.

Methods to improve the engineering properties of extruded fibre cement have been considered for over a century. From the laboratories of Brunel University, UK, Zhou and Li (2015) review this work and present their own results.

The theme of civil engineering materials is developed further by Smith and Frangi (2015) and Patlakas (2015), who present their work on the use of timber in civil engineering. The former explores the rebirth of timber within construction, including an insightful discussion on the barriers that have been overcome by research for modern timber use. The latter builds on this and offers a thesis on the development of a modelling package for structural timber use. This contributes to over 600 pieces of work hosted by ICE Publishing on timber, which can be accessed through both its physical and virtual library.

Thirty years of research and development on geogrids for transport is then concisely described by Cook and Andrews (2015) of Tensar. The theme is continued in Geddes (2015), who takes us to seven countries in Africa to tell the story of the UK government-funded Africa Community Access Programme, which has invested £25 million in research to improve the rural transport sector.

Smithies (2015) offers an evaluation of current design guidance to accommodate blind and partially sighted people, which complements recent work published on the subject in two *ICE Proceedings* journals (Bates, 2008; Thomas, 2011).

Our penultimate paper (Gibb *et al*., 2015) offers a fascinating discussion of 'wearable simulations' developed out of the laboratories of Loughborough University, UK. These allow the wearer to experience the symptoms of various occupational illnesses as experimential health and safety training.

The Ministry of Defence is one of the largest funders of research in the UK, an example of the civils aspects of which are discussed in our final paper by Hambly *et al*. (2015).

Finally, on behalf of the editorial panel, I would like to extend my thanks to those that have helped produce this issue, especially the authors of the above papers for sharing their experiences with us. I hope you find these papers enjoyable, and that they encourage you and your colleagues to consider sharing your own experiences through this and other *ICE Proceedings* journals.

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