

# FEDERATION OF PILING SPECIALISTS

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FPS QUARTERLY COMMITTEE MEETING

**Date:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022

**Time:** 10:00-13:00

**Location:** Hamilton House Conference Centre, London

**Present:**

Boris Caro Vargas	Bachy Soletanche
John Chick (Chair)	Expanded
Stephen Edmondson	Foundation Piling
Marc Evans	Vibro Menard
Brandon Ferreira	Van Elle
Kenneth Henderson	BAM Ritchies
Michael Jones	Bauer Technologies
Simon Jones	Keller
Chris Oram	Franki Foundations
Cliff Wren	Roger Bullivant
Jane Towse-Laval	Balfour Beatty

**In Attendance:**

Kathryn de Rochefort	FPS Secretariat
Ciaran Jennings	FPS Secretary

Owner	Action	Deadline
C Jennings	Speak to NOCN about having an extension on the Rig Operator 'yellow card' scheme pilot.	27 <sup>th</sup> May
ALL	To put forward any possible candidates for the 'yellow card' licence scheme.	Next Meeting
B Caro Vargas	To contact the Bachy project with the simulator and ask about gaining access for yellow card trainees.	Next Meeting
ALL	To gather any incidents that have involved swan necks.	Next Meeting
C Jennings	To inform Julia that the FPS will support her proposal and to let her know who she needs to contact for the events.	27 <sup>th</sup> May
S Edmondson	To circulate the updated schedule of attendance for approval.	Next Meeting
C Jennings	To contact Julia Hill about getting volunteers for the Technical TGs.	Next Meeting
C Jennings	To send out the Q1 for 2022 with notes.	ASAP

No	Minutes	
1.	<p><b>Apologises for Absence</b></p> <p>Bob Thompson (Keller), Daisy Fox (Franki Foundations), Phil Hines (Bachy Soletanche), Steve Hadley (Central Piling), Laylee Eftekhari (Bachy Soletanche), Sam Pyer (FK Lowry), Steve Wilson (Abby Pynford), Terry Muckian (Skanska), Darren Brockett (Rock &amp; Alluvium), Mark Pennington (Balfour Beatty) and Martin Pedley (GSS Piling).</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p><b>Approval of the Minutes from Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b></p> <p>John Chick ran through the actions from the previous meeting minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>NVQ in Piling Operations</i> - The Secretary had found volunteers to assist with updating the NVQ Level 2 and 3 qualifications.</li> <li>• <i>CPCS Yellow Card</i> - x2 applications are expected currently Ciaran will formally request an extension of the trial while the training route is established. Ciaran asked to group to put forward any possible candidates. Guidance for how to manage trainees on site is required and shall be developed with those putting them on site as part of the trial. Boris stated that Bachy also have a simulator and volunteered to contact the project to see about access for yellow card trainees. Jane also extended access for FPS Members to the simulator based in Birmingham.</li> <li>• <i>PI Insurance</i> – Julia Hill has sent Stephen Edmondson the contact details for an insurance broker, Stephen will be meeting with Gallaghers this week.</li> <li>• <i>Market research</i> – Ciaran stated that he circulated the Camargue Report, and Phil Hines he is looking to bring the costs down by scaling back the scope of the work.</li> <li>• <i>Contact with clients</i> – Ciaran has been in contact with Build UK, and they have proposed ‘breakfast briefings’ to take place with main contractors, which can use to put forward topics we wish to discuss. Malcolm O’Sullivan is looking at developing a proposal around sustainability, safety, and risk management.</li> <li>• <i>Safety Alerts</i> – John stated that we need to keep the effort up to share safety alerts with members. John also reported an issue with the swan neck on a Soilmec 175, several other members reported the same or similar experiences with swan necks. John stated that Casagrande have changed their design but suggested that we have all swan neck incidents gathered as it seems to be a reoccurring issue.</li> </ul> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.</p>	<p><b>C Jennings</b> <b>ALL</b></p> <p><b>B Caro Vargas</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Confirmation of the Executive Committee Members</b></p> <p>The Executive Committee Members were proposed by Cliff Wren and Seconded by Marc Evans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Chick – Chair</li> <li>• Malcolm O’Sullivan – Vice Chair</li> <li>• Stuart Norman – Junior Vice Chair</li> <li>• Steve Hadley – immediate past Chair.</li> </ul>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Approval of Accounts</b></p> <p>The resolution was passed to adopt the 2021 accounts and to appoint Crane &amp; Partners as auditors for 2022.</p>	

	<p>Boris asked how often we change the auditors, Ciaran stated that Crane and Partners have been performing the audit for the last 20 years John and Cliff stated that a cost comparison exercise was carried out 4 years ago and Crane &amp; Partners won this. It was agreed this exercise should be repeated at the end of the year.</p>	<b>Secretariat</b>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Welcome from the new Chair of the FPS</b></p> <p>John welcomed the group and offered thanks to Steve Hadley [immediate past Chair] for all of his work during his time as Chair and the positive impact that has been achieved over the past two years despite the disruption of COVID.</p> <p>John stated that as the new chair of the FPS he has three main aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote ground engineering as a career choice</li> <li>2. Keeping the Federation relevant and selling the industry</li> <li>3. Encouraging sustainability by design.</li> </ol> <p>He explained that working to a factor of safety of 3 meant that foundations were routinely over-designed and used far more steel and concrete than was strictly necessary. Jane Towse Laval agreed though noted that when the piling contractor is responsible for design they can value design, but consultants tend to be inflexible. It was also discussed the insurers need to be educated about factors of safety and design where there is enough supporting data to justify the reduction. John cited Thomas Hetherwick's design for the London Olympics' cauldron where he defied the brief to have no moving parts in order to not fail at the critical part of the opening and closing ceremonies. The final design had 428 moving parts but worked perfectly because it had been designed and tested to.</p> <p>The Secretary stated that the AGS are allied with this issue, and it is something we can raise with Build UK via the breakfast briefing initiative in order to educate people on reducing geotechnical risk using GI data and appropriate design.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>i. Labour Agencies</b></p> <p>The Secretary reported at the last Quarterly Meeting we discussed what could the FPS do in the face of poor standards of welfare, training and commercial behaviour from labour agencies. There were three main suggestions; Create a minimum standard, make Labour Agencies an Associate Members to give them accountability and bring them into a collective, potentially with auditing as a part of this or creating an FPS owned and run Labour Agency.</p> <p>Consensus agreed that we should create a minimum standard, Martin Pedley is currently creating a first draft. Very few committee members felt that making labour Agencies an associate member would be achieve what is required owing to commercial reality of a huge demand driving behaviours.</p> <p>It was felt that creating our own agency would take too much time and present difficult issues. However, there have been discussion about starting a labour exchange between FPS members to maximise the utilisation of teams and reduce reliance on labour agencies. It was noted that while this is possible it requires building relationships between Member company labour managers so that they explore this avenue first before they call a Labour Agency.</p>	

Marc queried if we have had any communications with Labour Agencies, Ciaran stated that Martin has had discussion with the agencies directly, they seem to of had a different experience to us and do not currently recognise our Members' experience.

We have had strong engagement from the larger labour agencies, but it is how we enforce our standards that remains the challenge to regulate them.

Michael highlighted that with the current market it is very difficult, you take who you can get. Jane added that agencies are currently inflating the base rate and many labour agency workers are realising that they are not receiving the same level of training and they are now looking to come on to the books permanently. Boris suggested we could have a priority list to encourage them to adopt our standards.

John highlighted that a weakness of setting a minimum standard is that we are committing to use them. John felt there needs to be a basic level of service embedded within the standards.

Stephen suggested that we could offer agency workers training at a cost, labour agencies have better trained staff, the worker has a qualification that they didn't previously, and we can be assured that they are properly trained when coming on site. Ciaran added that this could be tied with being an associate member.

The group felt that once HS2 has completed the need for agency works would dwindle and bringing them into the FPS would be ill advised especially as agencies may well buy rigs themselves and hold themselves out to be quality piling contractors. It was agreed that the Labour Exchange possibility should be pursued with a view to helping Members find quality staff to meet peaks in demand.

## **ii. FPS Apprenticeship**

John reported that there have been issues raised around the FPS apprenticeships, such as the time they take, the logistics they create, and staff being poached by other companies offering a quicker way around becoming qualified.

Jane stated that 4-5 years previously her son went through the apprenticeship and while the training was very good, the pay scale was very limiting.

Ciaran highlighted that due to government changes the apprenticeships have radically changed and has become a much bigger programme, which is possibly what has caused the issues now; NOCN have suggested finding a 'quick and dirty' way of have operatives trained within six weeks.

John added the apprenticeship is very broad, and queried is there a way we can narrow and accelerate the course and maybe introduce a timeframe to show candidates how they can progress.

Kenneth added that HS2 and other opportunities can be a big factor in distracting people from the apprenticeship route, as they can be relative unqualified and earn a lot more money.

Jane suggested that we could offer a condensed two-week course to get them onsite and then they can continue the qualification while gaining practical experience. She also highlighted the need to widen diversity as we have a very white male dominated workforce and currently no routes into different communities from non-white backgrounds.

The group also added that the travel and the hours are very unappealing especially for young families.

Jane stated that Balfour Beatty have had success with ex-offender programmes. John added that a lot of ex-offender schemes are currently full due to high demand for operatives. John noted that the pastoral support for apprentices is essential to ensuring they are retained and develop in the correct way. It was also commented that apprentices on the current scheme take longer to train but tend to be far more committed to the company and industry as a result and offer a much higher skill level than operatives who are being trained via ad hoc short courses to gain them the CPCS cards they need.

John suggested that we look to work with the Trailblazer review group to explore slimming down the apprenticeship in terms of the content and time taken to complete it to make it a more attractive option to employers.

### **iii. Material Price Volatility**

Jane stated that there has been a certain amount of stabilisation recently, John added availability of materials is now becoming an issue as well as cost – in particular reinforcement.

Stephen reported that the Commercial Committee has already discussed this issue and we do not know what the FPS can realistically do to support Members.

Ciaran stated that the FPS released a position paper on capping liabilities and that something similar could be possible in relation to recommending that fixed price contracts are not currently possible. Stephen suggested that it is more to do with educating clients about the strains the industry are currently facing. Stephen added that if we start using more sustainable designs, we can lessen the number of materials we use in the first place.

### **iv. FPS Audit Update**

The Secretary reported that the task group have been updating the FPS audit schedules, comparing our audit against ISO criteria such as ISO450, ISO1400 and ISO9001. We have found in the Quality audit that 95% has already been covered by the ISO 9000:2001 standard. We are now looking to redefine what quality means to the FPS beyond the ISO requirements, any suggestions or participation is welcome.

A sustainability section has been updated that covers using the Carbon Reporting spreadsheet, and we may wish to add sustainability by design into the criteria. The spreadsheet is an initiative from the EFFC, which will not be a

	<p>pass or fail part of the audit, to encourage companies to report on their S1 and S2 emissions on a quarterly basis, this has been driven by legislation and contract changes that will be put in place requiring all companies over a certain size to report on their carbon emissions and use low carbon alternatives. It will also assist with bench-marking progress over time. Ciaran asked the group if they would be happy to provide this data going forwards with their Quarterly order statistics return. No objections were raised.</p> <p>It was also noted that the Health &amp; Safety schedule is to incorporate more site-based requirements for safety and EDI requirements are being introduced into the Training schedule.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Working Group Updates</b></p> <p><b>i. Early Careers Group</b></p> <p>Ciaran presented on Julia’s behalf and reported that she is looking to host 3 Careers Fair physical events a year in Universities across the country for university students and school leavers.</p> <p>Members were asked for their support to make the event happen and for them to send representatives and company stands. Julia has established relationships with many universities across the country who are willing to participate. John asked the committee if all members are willing to support the proposal. All members agreed.</p> <p>Engagement with university students and post-graduates was discussed. Jane suggested that the FPS could offer a day release programme given the cost and time involved to be chartered. Chris Oram added that geotechnics is a very dry subject that is not well taught at university and supported industrial experience would give a better appreciation. John stated that most universities concentrate more on research rather employability. However, the government have stepped in to make the courses more employability friendly.</p> <p>Chris noted that there is still a lack of people coming through this route, John agreed and stated that Laing O’Rourke are down between 38-40% on applications, we need to sell a geotechnical career path at university and school level.</p> <p>Ciaran will inform Julia that the FPS will support her proposal and will let her know who she needs to contact for the events.</p> <p><b>ii. Commercial</b></p> <p>Stephen reported on behalf of the Commercial Committee.</p> <p>The group have updated the schedule of attendance, stipulating that clients are expected to provide storage for fuel to avoid theft. It was agreed this could be published to the FPS website.</p> <p>The group have also been discussing price volatility, the affect on companies and insolvencies. They wanted to create an early warning system but there was reluctance to do anything as the FPS owing to competition concerns, so they have contacted a credit reference agency called ‘Top Service’. They have added a ‘piling’ category and they are willing to offer FPS members a discount</p>	C Jennings



	<p>The group have also planned to host a webinar on HVO fuels, outlining what, why and how.</p> <p><b>v. Operations, Plant &amp; Safety</b></p> <p>Simon reported on behalf of the Safety, Plant and Operations Committee. The group last met in March where we had 4 companies present (ABI, Bauer, Casagrande, Liebherr).</p> <p>He and Matt Smith have started doing reinforcement supplier audits, we recently completed the audit with Lemon Groundwork solutions.</p> <p>They have a story board, script, and a company for the working platform video, and are looking for sites to film. There is also a new interest in looking at the risk around collapsing piles, concerning the safety of worker when in proximity to piles following a fatality in France.</p> <p>In terms of guidance the manual handling, silica, concrete pumps have all been updated on the FPS website.</p> <p>There are concerns around the lack of safety alerts being shared within the FPS.</p> <p>Simon asked the group to push their respective companies to submit their accident statistics. Ciaran added that it is a membership requirement to submit the numbers each quarter.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Quarterly Order Statistics (Q1 2022)</b></p> <p>Ciaran will circulate the statistics with notes.</p>	C Jennings
9.	<p><b>Contacts with other Organisations</b></p> <p><b>a) Build UK</b></p> <p>Ciaran reported as previously mentioned we are looking to arrange breakfast briefings through Build UK with main contractors. If anyone has any issues, they would like to be taken to the briefings send suggestions to the FPS email.</p> <p><b>b) EFFC</b></p> <p>Ciaran reported that the DFI/EFFC Berlin Conference will be held from the 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> May, we encourage you to register, currently there are 175 registered and we are expecting around 250. There are also sponsorship opportunities available.</p> <p>The EFFC SWG have produced a Carbon Reduction Guide that we hope to promote at the conference, it will likely be a joint release from the EFFC and the DFI.</p> <p><b>c) PSRO (Plant Sector Representation Organisation)</b></p> <p>Ciaran reported this is an organisation that oversees all of the card schemes, we are part of it as well as CPCS, CSCS and they help us achieve the yellow card.</p> <p>They have started looking into the idea of whether card schemes guarantee competence, this may be a subject of conversation in the future.</p>	

10.	<p><b>Social Events</b></p> <p><b>i) 2022 Events</b></p> <p><b>a. Summer Ball- Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June, Coombe Abbey</b>  Ciaran reported that we currently we have 154 registrations and 28 bedrooms left. The deadline to register for the Summer Ball is Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May. All companies must also provide a raffle prize.</p> <p><b>b. Golf Day- Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September, Whittlebury Park</b>  All members are encouraged to attend.</p> <p><b>c. Annual Awards Dinner-Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October, Intercontinental Park Lane</b>  Ciaran stated that the Awards Dinner was very well attend last year but not by associate members, everyone please encourage associate members to attend.</p>	
11.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>No other business.</p>	
12.	<p><b>Next Meeting Dates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022</b></li> <li>• <b>Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 1-4pm 2022 (Awards Dinner)</b></li> </ul>	