

Big 5 Innovation Precast Summit to Run Nov 26 & 27

New practices can unleash precast concrete's potential

Chris Seymour is head of Advisory, Middle East and South Asia for Mott MacDonald. He will present the keynote address on the first day of the Innovation in Precast Summit, part of The Big 5. In advance of the summit, Seymour presents his thoughts.

The use of precast concrete continues its steady growth, reportedly reaching over 40% adoption, but a change in regional procurement habits is needed if precast concrete is to realise its full potential. There is no doubt that design and build has advanced more slowly in the region than many predicted, and this is likely to be one of the factors holding back adoption of



infrastructure assets is very positive. Interest in PPP will bring more sophistication in procurement, which will focus on speed of construction, dependable quality and long predictable life – something which also has positive effects on the cost of finance. Precast is able to offer these advantages, though we will need to wait for improvement in transport networks to fully offset the disadvantages of increased transport costs – one of the key challenges with this solution. For villa and low-rise residential development, however, there are many form options which have already been tried, and being smaller, they are easier to transport.

precast as a solution of choice.

This transition to different forms of procurement often drives efficiency, which would lead to more use of precast and introduce other methodologies to improve speed, consistency and quality of build. Contract awards coming into the market, which provide the volume needed to lift the metabolic rate of the system, are a key catalyst that will assist the transition, creating pressure in the system and allowing the market to innovate more rapidly, turning to smarter and faster ways of delivery.

Reassuringly, the industry is heading in the right direction, with design and build procurement among other options on a steady upward trajectory. The pace of adoption may also provide precast plant operators the opportunity to invest in the latest automation, when it is time to build capacity. Precast plants have shown they can adapt quickly and that the technology can be brought in, despite the challenge around the intensive demands on capital, but this depends on a visible pipeline of projects.

In the GCC, Saudi Arabia remains the biggest market with the strongest domestic demand, and hence the future for the creation of



The attractiveness of precast as a more environmentally sustainable option also scores points with government bodies, due mainly to the lower waste of producing a given volume of concrete in terms of form work and labour.

We expect to see continued growth in the use of precast as a structural and cladding solution for the built environment. This is likely to be assisted by both the need for faster delivery and greater certainty of lifecycle, both of which we see as increasingly important in this region.

The Big 5 Innovation in Precast Summit will be held on 26 & 27 November 2017 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. In partnership with Betontage, it will unveil the latest techniques and technology for the regional precast market, as well as a full agenda featuring leading experts in the precast industry. ●

Held at the same location as in previous years, The Big 5 Heavy trade fair will run 26-28 March 2018 and showcase the latest products in precast processing as well as heavy machinery for the transportation and installation of all construction materials.