



Newsletter #1

9 July 2025

Dear ,

Welcome to the first newsletter brought to you by the Conflict Avoidance Coalition (CAC).

I would like to begin by saying that, during my tenure as chair of CAC, I can safely say this has been one of the most interesting and enjoyable and satisfying journeys I've experienced during a long career. It has been stimulating to work with so many like-minded people who are committed to ending conflict in the industry. This is going to be a long journey for us all because, as everyone knows, cultural and attitudinal change doesn't happen overnight. The construction industry in the United Kingdom and abroad, is often slow to embrace innovative concepts, but I am absolutely convinced that, with the level of collaboration we are seeing across the Coalition, we will be successful. As President of CAC, I am committed to supporting the new Chair, Richard Bayfield, and the members of the coalition's Steering Group in the months and years that lie ahead, and I certain we will see this campaign gaining traction across the whole industry.

Len Buntton, President

Chair's Comments

Lessons from the late Sir Michael Latham and Sir John Armitt

I have just read the Sunday Times article on HS2, title "[The Money Train](#)" and published on Sunday 6th July. The surprise for me and probably for many of you, is how long it has taken for this story to reach mainstream media. In a week's time Radio 4 will begin a series on the story of HS2. For those of us who have seen the HS2 failure, whether at a distance or close hand, the script will be the same. The primary reasons for failure are centred on poor Governance and poor Client skills. There will be some additional ingredients of uninformed political interference together with, a lack of accountability, an absence of checks and balances. This is not new news and there are no new lessons. In fact, Sir Michael Latham wrote to both the Government and to Industry in July 1994 and I quote some prophetic words "*The time to choose has arrived. The construction process cannot wait 30 years for another Banwell or 50 years for another Simon.*"

In fact the construction industry waited almost 31 years for the [Stewart Review](#) (June 2025) into the Governance failures of HS2. In the late Sir Michael's words there was more than a hint that Governments, of whatever colour, do not learn. I was fortunate to work with Sir Michael and his major report emphasised the need for improving Client skills in public sector projects such that Government organisations procuring Infrastructure would be seen as "exemplars of good practice". Latham also advised fairer risk allocation, greater transparency, collaborative working and fast dispute resolution via 28-day Adjudications, to avoid lengthy delays and high costs waiting on Court or Arbitration.

Sir John Armitt is an exemplar Client using the Latham tests. Last November Sir John was the keynote speaker for the first CAC annual conference. Sir John spoke about the

importance of the Client to provide the project with Leadership, Governance, Accountability and Strategy. In other words, the Client sets the tone. Sir John Armitt set the bar high in his role as Client for the London Olympics. There was clearly huge agreement between Sir John and the late Sir Michael on how to achieve successful project delivery. In simple terms the London Olympics adopted Latham and was successful however HS2 has not adopted Latham so far and has failed. There are good signs that the reset of HS2 under the new CEO, Mark Wild, will now adopt many Latham principles.

Meanwhile it is clear we do not need another Industry report, we can take the Latham report to our Clients unamended.

Going forward our challenge as senior industry representatives is to help the world of construction be more predictable, resilient, efficient and more effective. Our skill sets and experience need to move into, or seep into, Clients in the public sector in particular.

I was recently asked about subcontractor selection, and I looked up Latham who wrote:

Recommendation 18 “A joint Code of Practice for the Selection of Subcontractors should be drawn up which should include commitments to short tender lists, fair tendering procedures and teamwork on site (Chapter 6, paragraph 6.41).”

I could not improve on Latham's recommendation! Indeed, one of our key CAC themes is “by sharing knowledge, promoting best practices, and supporting early resolution methods, we're making the industry more resilient, efficient, and productive”. We face legitimate scrutiny by the media, but we should take comfort that as a Coalition we are founded on the Latham principles which have a proven track record of success.

Richard Bayfield, Chair

CAC Steering Group Members

Len Bunton (President)
Richard Bayfield (Chair)
Jeremy Glover (Vice Chair)
Ed Schryver (Vice Chair)
Ian McIlwee (Treasurer)
Sue Barrett
Ashley Belcher
Stephen Blakey
Martin Burns
Julie Forsyth
Ysella Jago
Jim McCluskey

News in brief

- The new CAC website has been launched. <https://conflictavoidance.org/> and, as a result, it is now necessary for Pledge Signatories to re-register. It will only take a few moments to complete.
- The CAC continues to make a significant impact on changing the industry's attitude to the way disagreements and disputes are dealt with. Support for the campaign is growing across all sectors of construction and engineering. In July, the **Construction Industry Council (CIC)** committed to the **Conflict Avoidance Pledge**. This was closely followed by endorsement from the **Construction Leadership Council (CLC)** which published a message to industry encouraging clients and suppliers to sign up to the Pledge. The CLC also publicly endorsed the work of the Conflict Avoidance Coalition.
- Another recent signatory of the Pledge, the **Environment Agency**, is taking active steps to promote the Pledge and encourage use of conflict avoidance measures by

contractor's on their Frameworks across the UK.

- Several of the Scottish Futures Trust Hubs have also signed the Conflict Avoidance Pledge and we understand they will be embedding conflict avoidance and management measures into new contracts going to tender.
- Presentations were recently made by coalition stalwarts Brian Allan and Shy Jackson to the legal and commercial team on the Sizewell C nuclear power station. Brian, together with Liam Forry, has also given a presentation on conflict avoidance to the Hinckley Point Professional Services Group.

Coalition Working Groups

You will see from the new website; the coalition has established several working groups. Below we have set out the remit of these groups and the name of the respective chairperson. If you wish to get involved, please contact the Chairs directly.

Client Engagement Group

Chair Len Bunton [len@buntonconsulting.co.uk] - coordinates the development of public and private sector clients by promoting CAP, also providing a follow-up to Pledge Signatories to assist them in embedding the processes into their day-to-day business models. Developing presentation material and the development of information on the progress of integrating CAP Into the construction industry.

This group will also periodically review the Pledge Signatory information. We will help organisations move to silver and gold status and will work with these organisations to help them embed conflict avoidance measures into client relationships.

Communications and Social Media

Chair Edward Schryver [edward.schryver@vzb-eng.com] - responsible for developing protocols for communicating to the construction industry in the UK and also to Pledge Signatories appropriate criteria for any social media communications.

International

Chair Paul Taggart [Paul@constructionCSLLP.com] - responsible for developing Conflict Avoidance Processes; liaising with funding institutions, development companies and international contracting organisations etc.

Contracts Group

Chair Anthony Armitage [anthony.armitage@thirdway.com] - promotes the benefits of contract standardisation in construction as a core element of conflict avoidance. Our message, supported by the Construction Leadership Council, is that amendments to standard form building contracts should be relevant to the project, the client or the commercial deal, and should be explained.

We now have 24 members with expertise reaching across all sector professions. In collaboration with the Finishes and Interiors Sector we will be publishing a report in the coming weeks on the Responsible Contracting Roundtable event that took place in Conflict Avoidance Week. It will include game-changing recommendations on intelligent design and simplification of the contracting process to create tools for collaboration.

Please forward this newsletter to colleagues and friends who may be interested. If you are thinking of joining the Coalition please go to our website for more information and a short application form www.conflictavoidance.org

(Note: There is no charge. It is free to join the coalition and sign the Pledge).

Go to the Website

