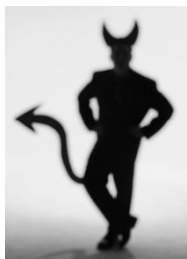


Good neighbours?



– or hell to live with?



Short term neighbours

Our work is about solving construction challenges to get the job done on time, on spec and on budget for our clients before we move onto the next site. Yet though we're not a long term member of the local communities around us, we still need to be a good neighbour, because we know how disruptive it can be for locals to have a major construction job in their midst.

Most people welcome new developments and are pretty tolerant of the inevitable disruption to their everyday lives as they are built, but they can be quick to complain to us, the council or our clients if we fail to treat them with respect.

For this reason, many of our site controls focus on protecting neighbours from dust, noise, vibration, exhaust fumes, cracking or failure of the ground, broken pipes or phone and power lines, all of which can make life very difficult for passers-by and people in nearby buildings.

Long term commitments

Standard environmental controls can also help minimise such side-effects of our business on our neighbours, for example we should routinely:

- cover stockpiles to prevent dust and waste blowing onto buildings, cars and pedestrians
- cover bins and making sure they don't leak slippery trails across footpaths, or release rubbish to be blown around the neighbourhood
- work with care around local trees, or replant where they are unavoidably harmed
- protect local trees, footpaths, roads and underground services
- use wheel-washes or entry-exit points to keep local streets free of mud and dust
- know and comply with standards for noise and vibration levels and permitted hours, and let the neighbours know what these are and who to call if they have a problem
- consider noise levels and the ability to muffle any new plant and equipment like pumps or generators – or specify quietness as part of your purchasing criteria for new plant
- put site entrances, parking areas and mobile plant where exhaust fumes will have the least effect.

Convert complaints to compliments

A well-handled complaint can convert a brickbat into a bouquet – one site took a distant neighbour's night-time noise complaint very seriously. They took her all round the site until she was able to identify the source of the noise – a muffling system on a pump that needed repair. She was thrilled to have a special VIP tour, and even more pleased to have the problem solved. She became a real ambassador for the site.

Remember – there's nothing like a clean and tidy site to make a good impression – and a lasting one, on neighbours – and it'll help you to do the job more efficiently as well – which will impress clients when you bid for the next job.



Clare Feeney is a sustainability strategist who helps organisations of all types grow their sustainability capability. She can help you grow jobs, increase profits and improve the environment – and have fun along the way! You can find out more at www.clarefeeney.com and contact her at clare@clarefeeney.com.