



edie Live explores  
sustainability megatrends



## PART 3 - THE EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF POPULATION GROWTH AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Next in edie's series of thought-leadership articles on the global impact of megatrends, Carillion's chief sustainability officer *David Picton* explores how businesses can adapt to the increasing challenges of demographic and social change at a time when populations are continuing to rise and people in all regions are living longer.

The mythical Chinese proverb wishing that we may "live in interesting times" could well apply to the next few decades of population growth and social change.

Our global family is projected to include a further billion people by 2030 - mostly from emerging or developing countries, with Africa's population set to double by 2050. The over-65s are likely to represent the fastest growing section of the population; migration will draw ever more people into urban areas and technology will continue to transform processes, risks and opportunities throughout our work and our lives. Change may remain our only constant, offering sustainability professionals both a duty and a chance to capitalise on it.

Of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, number 11 is key: Sustainable Cities and Communities. With great demographic shifts across the continents, rising

urban diversity, increasingly mobile and agile societies, resource pressure and infrastructure constraints, business professionals and community leaders can - and must - shape these sustainable communities. Whilst this brings some risk, it could be more of an opportunity to shape and demand responsible business, delivering more flexible services and infrastructure - delivered through authentic, strategic commitments and Partnerships of Equals.

### Turning challenges into opportunities

With information now shared - literally - at lightspeed, a key implication for corporate sustainability is to implement economic, environmental and social responsibility programmes that are balanced and ambitious, but flexible enough to adapt to change. Reflecting on sustainable communities and the complexity of services and infrastructure they will require, the work they generate will be both 'just the same' and radically different. ▶



Engaging and leading people, delivering operations, managing finance and resources will remain core, but how we do them will be very different. Solutions for our interaction with technology will need to be designed by those best equipped to make them real and workable – the workforce themselves.

Sustainability programmes must help to grow and manage balanced and diverse workforces. Intergenerational learning and employee collaboration will help to support and harness the benefits of rising stars and more mature workers. Additional training or apprenticeships designed for attracting and retaining older professionals may prove highly successful for businesses to engage and motivate this demographic. More than ever, in a world of increasingly unregulated information sources and 'fake' news, authentic knowledge sharing will be key to unlocking the potential of the workforce across all age groups.

BMW has addressed the potential challenges of an ageing workforce through an innovative re-design of its factory space. Following a collaborative process with workers, the carmaker made 70 changes to areas such as factory layout, material usage and operational practices, all of which contributed to a 7% increase in productivity in just one year. Meanwhile, technology firm Cisco Systems has re-assessed its traditional office space, giving employees freedom to choose their environment from a range of workspaces and technology tools, based on task requirements. Decentralised and virtual working means that we will need to embrace initiatives ranging from flexible and multi-purpose technology platforms to office designs which minimise carbon and cut resource use whilst also promoting health and boosting productivity.

## Empowering the next generation

Alongside these trends, rising levels of international inequality make it evermore pivotal to engage, motivate and empower multi-cultural generations, supporting their development through an early blend of education, experiences, vocational training and employment. For integrated services and construction, Carillion is the lead partner for the Government-backed Your Life campaign, which promotes careers linked to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) education by connecting schools with businesses across the UK and offering valuable experiences such as educational visits.

Providing younger millennials with broader routes into work will help to address the imbalance of social mobility, as well as helping businesses unlock more diverse talents,

skills and backgrounds. Businesses must also recognise that this demographic has greater expectations of working internationally than their ancestors. For multi-nationals such as Carillion, this presents a positive challenge and a real opportunity to help broaden experience and future-proof the workforce.

Population growth and social change will indeed present challenges to engage workers, build community trust and deliver flexible services. Businesses must continue to place people at the heart of those commitments, whilst working in very different ways which genuinely conserve resources and tackle global issues such as air quality and carbon reduction. Bringing this all to reality in a balanced environmentally, economically and socially responsible way will require sustainability professionals to position integrated programmes as core strategic commitments, rather than 'nice-to-have' add-ons. The Sustainable Development Goals do offer a decent roadmap for these "interesting times" ahead – but it's up to us all to read that map, plot our organisation's routes and travel them well. ■

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**The world is facing demographic and social transformations that will have profound implications both locally and globally, posing significant challenges for governments and businesses**



## Sustainability megatrends at edie Live 2017

This new series of thought-leadership pieces will provide an overview of the environmental and social impacts of the world's megatrends; exploring how they are helping to shape the low-carbon, resource-efficient business of the future.

The series will culminate with a high-level discussion focused on megatrends at the Strategy and Innovation conference on day 2 of edie Live at the NEC Birmingham, 24 May 2017. From climate change and resource scarcity to socio-economics and technology as an enabler, this half day addresses the top level trends that answer the question 'Why act and what happens if we don't?'

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David Picton is the chief sustainability officer of British multinational facilities management and construction firm Carillion, leading the development and delivery of the group's Sustainability 2020 strategy across its UK and international markets.

Integrating responsible business throughout its operations, Carillion's award-winning sustainability programme delivers six positive outcomes – for its people, for the environment and for profitable business growth.