

INSIGHT #8 : WELLBEING

Concrete structures and finishes can improve quality of life

Any sustainable development strategy needs to address a variety of social aspects to maintain the health and wellbeing of employees, neighbours and building users.

The health and safety of employees is the first priority of the concrete industry and it has established continuous improvement targets with the overall aim of zero harm. Two key measures are reported: lost time incidents (LTI) frequency rate, which has reduced by 40% since 2010, and reportable injuries, which have fallen by 19% since 2008. In 2017, the industry also added its support to Mates in Mind, to raise awareness of mental health issues and dispel the stigma surrounding them.

The concrete industry strategy

87%

OF RELEVANT SITES WERE ACTIVE IN THEIR COMMUNITY IN 2016



The White Collar Factory in London, designed by Allford Hall Monaghan Morris – see Matt Massey interview, opposite

❓ DID YOU KNOW

1,500 miles of concrete safety barriers have been installed on UK motorway, reducing the risk of crossover accidents and protecting lives



Photo: Hanson UK



'I DON'T SEE EXPOSED CONCRETE AS A FAD – IT WILL STAND THE TEST OF TIME'

Matt Massey is senior project manager at Derwent London, which is at the forefront of office development in the capital

Is wellbeing increasing in importance?

Wellbeing is coming up on tenants' agendas a lot more than it ever did before. Previously, they might have been more likely to put up with what they had. Now, there's an expectation of more and people are quite happy to vocalise what they want. Tenants are demanding more detailed specs at letting stage and asking more detailed questions around wellness to do with local control over temperature, ventilation or lighting. As a result, we're taking on more in relation to wellness as part of the base build. It's all about making places more adaptable for the individual rather than for the masses. At the White Collar Factory, for example, there are five different

ways for tenants to control cooling, and we've seen people there embrace that local control over their 5-10m² zone.

What is the business case for wellbeing?

Happier tenants! We want people to say that they like their building because it's a Derwent building with openable windows and localized controls. This does give us an edge – we're 98% let across our portfolio. For tenants, the quality of the environment is a massive sales pitch to attract young staff. Tenants can also save on energy bills – WCF's energy bills are 28% less than more traditional buildings.

Why do Derwent London's buildings often feature lots of exposed concrete?

Having a robust concrete structure is key to what we do – at the White Collar Factory we have embedded concrete core cooling which gives a much

nicer feel inside the workplace. The wellbeing factor increases because you aren't getting a jet of cold air down your neck, or having that extra level of noise from plant on the same floor. As well as the thermal benefits of using concrete as a heat sink, we effectively have a structure that is also the finish. Having these different purposes in one form is so much less wasteful than throwaway suspended ceilings, and tenants also appreciate the aesthetic benefits. Personally, I don't see exposed concrete as a fad – I think it will stand the test of time. Already it's gone from being something for technology and creative companies to being aimed at the banking and legal sectors as well.

How will you take wellbeing further in your future buildings?

We haven't had any of our buildings WELL accredited yet but we're looking to adopt WELL in some of our major projects from next year.

In Hanson's new ready-mixed concrete trucks, a lower driving position and panoramic glass cab gives drivers better visibility of cyclists and pedestrians, improving road safety. They also run on hybrid fuel, helping to lower carbon emissions from transport

includes metrics on local community liaison and its emphasis on manufacturing sites having certified environmental management systems helps to minimise unwanted emissions to air and water. There are also industry initiatives in place to protect vulnerable road users, as well as sector guidance for the safe installation and handling of concrete products.

Concrete structures can also make a significant contribution to society by improving the local surroundings, providing a secure and comfortable space for the activities of its occupants and being an adaptable and durable asset within the built environment.

Concrete's inherent performance credentials, such as fire and acoustic separation, thermal mass with no off-gassing, are increasingly being understood as an important part of their contribution to the health and wellbeing of tenants and occupants.