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TWO PARTS SURVEYOR, THREE PARTS DIPLOMAT

Julian Davies outlines the many issues faced by building surveyors

The greatest value a building surveyor can add to a major works project is not the level of technical detail they have amassed.

It is true that they can't get by without qualifications and expertise. They need to be technically perfect (as should every professional).

But surveying work and contractual obligations only actually account for about 40 per cent of the time surveyors spend on a typical major works project. The other 60 per cent is spent on diplomacy.

Any major works project is defined by a number of interested parties. They always include the site manager (or owner), the leaseholders and the contractors.

The managers are worried about budgets, workload, complaints, logistics and leaseholder interference. The leaseholders have every right to interfere as they are worried about mess, disruption, noise, damage and costs. The contractors are worried about budgets, unforeseen issues and getting paid.

And so whenever building surveyors find themselves managing major works, the biggest issues have not been caused by the climate or the building's infrastructure, but by juggling the interests of everyone involved.

Surveyors will typically arrive on site to be greeted by questions about noise from machines, dust from the works,

or the costs of the project. On one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, a lady well-into her seventies instructed me to remove the scaffold netting immediately as it left her unable to use her air rifle out of the window. In central London. And yes, that's 100 per cent true!

The absence of surprises is the key. As a result, building surveyors have developed a whole array of processes to ensure that every stakeholder is brought into the works from the very start.

It's not rocket science. This simple insight will ensure the smooth-running of even large and complicated works.

Julian Davies is Managing Director at Earl Kendrick Associates

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