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### Abuse commonplace for contractors

Nearly two-thirds of respondents to the latest survey at [www.contractjournal.com](http://www.contractjournal.com) have been abused by the public while on site. Following last week's revelation that highways workers faced a barrage of "coins, cans, cones and piss" as well as verbal abuse, 65% of respondents to the *CJ* survey said they had suffered abuse.

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**A BRIDGE TOO FAR:** Demolition Company Partnership (DCP) lifted and removed a City landmark at the weekend. The 60t pedestrian link bridge spanned Charterhouse Street in London. DCP designed and erected a hanging scaffold. The bridge was reduced to its basic steel-framed structure before being removed on Sunday. DCP was helped by AGS Scaffolding and Baldwin Crane Hire. The removal of the bridge marks the first stage in Castlemore's proposals to redevelop the site.

Photograph: Christopher Woods

# Jarvis fire station PFI hit by delays

■ Tyneside projects three months behind schedule; subbies 'down tools over payment'

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Jarvis is running three months late on its £30m fire station PFI in Tyneside.

Six new-build fire stations were due to be completed in June, but will not now be ready until October at the earliest due to a reported slow down in work and subcontractors downing tools over late payment.

A Jarvis spokeswoman said: "We are running a few weeks behind schedule. If you go around the sites there is a lot of work going on. We are working

with the fire authority.

"Work was virtually halted a month ago, but the amount of labour on site has been picking up dramatically and continues to do so.

"We would expect the first station to open in the early part of October."

A Tyne & Wear Fire Authority spokesman confirmed the PFI project was running late, although he was confident the project would be completed by the agreed deadline.

"We had a recent meeting with Jarvis and we were reassured that everything is now back on

track and the new deadline would be reached," he said.

However, one project source told *CJ*: "Work has virtually ground to a halt across all the sites. Some of the sites have only one worker carrying out work.

"Many subcontractors stopped work and walked off site after they became worried that they wouldn't be paid by Jarvis due to its financial difficulties. Looking at work in progress at the moment, it is unlikely that Jarvis will meet the October deadline."

The Fire Authority spokesman added: "We need to discuss the issue [of compensation claims]

after completion and see what clauses are in the contract."

The six stations, in the order in which they are to be opened, are: North Moor Lane, Sunderland; Market Lane in Swalwell; Colby Court and Union Road in Newcastle; Dryden Road in Low Fell, Gateshead; and Glover Road in Washington.

A new headquarters in Barmston Mere in Washington and a technical service centre on Gateshead's Quayside are also being built.

Jarvis was awarded the contract in December 2002 after beating Kajima.

## Hospital finalists are made to sweat it out

contract news

The two contenders in the frame for a massive PFI hospital deal in Leicestershire will now have to sweat it out until the end of this year before they know which has made the grade.

The preferred bidder deadline for the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust's scheme has been put back a fourth time, with the deadline now set at December for Catalyst (Bovis Lend Lease) and Equion/Laing O'Rourke.

Project director Deborah Matthews said: "The trust has decided to extend the timetable to ensure it receives the best affordable design and service

solution the bidders can deliver. The project is one of the largest PFI schemes outside of London."

The trust puts the capital cost of the deal at around £500m, compared with £400m when it was originally proposed in 2002.

But insiders claim the project has undergone "considerable design changes" at the hands of the public sector and is now "rising towards the £1bn mark".

The project involves upgrading three acute facilities and comprises a children's hospital at the Leicester Royal Infirmary site, a women's hospital at the Glenfield Hospital site and a rehabilitation hospital and training centre at the Leicester General site.

## ECA is industry's richest

The Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) remains by far the richest construction industry body and is nationally second only to the National Farmers Union in terms of total funds and gross assets, according to the Certification Office for Trade Union and Employer Associations.

The latest Certification Office annual report shows the ECA had total funds of £45m and gross assets worth £66m at the 2003/04 year end. A membership of 2,122 electrical contracting

firms brought in a subscription income of £2.9m. Total income was £12.8m.

The NFU had 138,621 members, bringing in £21.7m in subscriptions. The farmers' total funds stood at £52.5m and their gross assets were worth £71m.

The Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association came out as the second-richest construction employer body. Its 1,398 members paid £2.8m in subscriptions. It ended the year with funds of £5m and gross assets worth £9.7m.

## Accord's site facilities help 'boost productivity'

Investing in better site facilities for highway gangs improves their productivity, according to Accord.

Operations director Luke Meechan said the company puts its money where its mouth is and has bought 12 high-spec welfare units from Groundhog.

"The traditional basics of a store and Portaloos are unsightly and prone to damage and vandalism," he said.

"Rather than provide the minimum that the Health and Safety at Work Act demands, we believe

that investing in high-spec facilities pays dividends."

The new Groundhog units have a kitchen with microwave and seating for six people, washing and toilet facilities and a self-contained supply of hot and cold water.

As well as keeping staff happy and productive, the units aid Accord's marketing. "We want the Accord name to be linked with professional-looking, environmentally friendly sites. These units improve public relations," Meechan said.

## Pidgley's team set for £100m Berkeley bonus

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Berkeley could have a fight on its hands on Friday at its AGM in Cobham, Surrey, if shareholders tell chief executive Tony Pidgley his team's proposed £100m bonus package is excessive.

The bonus is part of a plan to shrink the group's housebuilding assets and return £1.4bn to investors over the next six years.

Shareholders stand to get £12 a share.

In return, Pidgley and three other directors would be reward-

ed with a 15% stake in a slimmed-down company that would focus on urban regeneration. Assuming a total value of £500m to £700m, this would give Pidgley's team a slice worth £100m.

Pidgley is reported to have told investors that he will quit the company if shareholders block the bonus package.

Some shareholders, including Scottish Widows and Saad Investments, are backing the proposal. Berkeley needs 75% of investors to vote in favour of the restructure for it to proceed.

## First Welsh homes deal is done

contract news

Lovell and Connaught have the key to £30m-worth of housing upgrade work on the first local authority stock transfer in Wales.

Over the next five years, the firms will modernise more than

6,000 formerly council-owned homes in the north of Bridgend for not-for-profit landlord Valleys to Coast Housing.

Work on site starts next month, with tasks including new kitchens, new central heating systems and electrical rewiring.