

ceca
SOUTH WEST

ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

CECA SOUTH WEST CHAIR'S WELCOME

It's been a real pleasure and privilege to represent the South West civil engineering contracting industry this past year and although I've been absent for some of that time for health reasons, I'm already looking forward to what we can achieve together in 2026.

Once again, it's been a challenging year for contractors in the region and a mixed picture in terms of the work pipeline. Water companies are only now starting to deliver on their promise of a bonanza of opportunities for the supply chain under AMP8. Similarly, the rail sector under the CP7 framework is falling short on its future work pipeline for the Tier 2s. The SMEs and Tier 2s have been hurting as a result. Highways too is a testing environment with local councils strapped for money for both capital and maintenance schemes. But contrast that with the defence and energy sectors which are buzzing with potential work opportunities from the MoD, DIO, Babcock, National Grid and a number of South West ports who are developing proposals for turbine lay-down areas to service the impending Celtic Array offshore windfarm.



CECA South West Chair Abie Hearn (Ringway/SW Highways)

Continuing on an upbeat theme, CECA South West is getting ever closer to realising its plans for a new civil engineering construction hub at Chudleigh in Devon with member company, Bridge and training provider, AccXel making it possible. Our proposal is currently going through planning with Teignbridge District Council who have been extremely supportive so far. Potential start-up costs are looking increasingly likely to be met by the newly formed Devon & Torbay Combined Authority which will begin to receive devolved powers and funding from central Government in April 2026 so that it can actively promote and support adult skills and local economic development. Believe me, it will happen – and soon!

CECA South West continues to provide its members with a full training programme and comprehensive client engagement. Increasingly high-profile guest speakers at its quarterly members' meetings have resulted in increasing numbers of attendees on a regular basis. Our ongoing commitment to encouraging new talent into our industry continues ever more strongly, not only by way of the proposed training hub (previously mentioned) but also through the dedicated efforts of the CECA South West Foundations Group. Throughout the year, this Group has attended careers' fairs and given presentations to schools and colleges as well as starring in our latest industry-leading recruitment video: 'Where Are They Now?'. These young engineers and technicians deserve our heartfelt thanks, as do their employers who allow them the time to contribute so wholeheartedly.

Back in October, CECA's 'Better Infrastructure' conference took place at Sandy Park with client and contractor speakers representing every sector of our industry on the themes of resilience and decarbonisation. Over 100 delegates and exhibitors attended this key event.

Whilst all this goes on in our region, CECA's national team in Westminster, led by Policy and Public Affairs Director, Ben Goodwin continues to champion the issues of most concern to South West members. Regular engagement with MPs, government ministers, the Construction Leadership Council, CITB and the various procurement organisations has led to recent successes including mitigating the extent of the proposed hike in landfill tax and achieving greater visibility of the work pipeline in the public sector. Holding the Government to task on the importance of civil engineering infrastructure spending remains a key objective for CECA. This follows its adoption by the incoming Labour Party in its manifesto – a policy decision which CECA lobbied for strongly before and during the last General Election.

On a final note, I have to say that I'm very much looking forward to working with and continuing to represent CECA South West members during my second term as your Chair, to help make this a safer and more prosperous industry for everyone.

Thank you and best wishes,

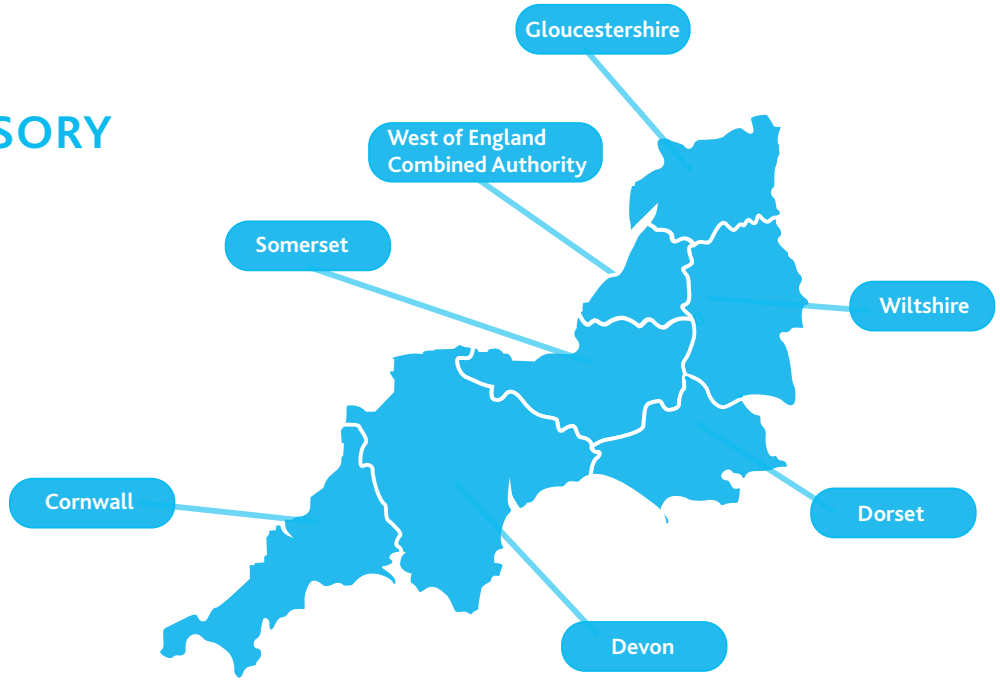


Abie Hearn, CECA South West Chair

SOUTH WEST ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG)

The current chair, vice chair and past chairs of CECA South West collectively form the South West Advisory Group alongside CECA South West Director, Paul Santer.

Quarterly meetings are held to strategise, consider and address key industry challenges for the South West region and the wider UK.





CECA South West Director Paul Santer (above) is ably assisted by CECA South West Office Manager Linda Evans (below)

Advisory Group

Director – Paul Santer

Chair – Abie Hearn (South West Highways/Ringway)

Vice Chair – Claire Coetzee (MJ Church)

Phil Ramsden – OCU Group

Dave Ellis – Bridge Civil Engineering

Jon Benton – VolkerStevin

Andy Pritchard – Tilbury Douglas

Andy Beech – Kier



The CECA South West Advisory Group



CECA SOUTH WEST MEMBERSHIP

CECA'S CORE PILLARS

CECA has produced its Core Pillars model which defines the key objectives on which CECA will deliver for its members in the future, as depicted below:



The following pages demonstrate how CECA South West is aligning its activities to these five Core Pillars.

CECA's Core Pillars

CECA's 'core pillars' model structures five key sectors of work we undertake in making the case for infrastructure, delivering services to members, and ensuring that civil engineering contractors in the UK are best placed to win work, create jobs, and drive economic growth. Our core pillars are:



CLIENTS, POLICY & WORKLOAD

Clients, Policy & Workload focuses on ensuring a sustainable pipeline of infrastructure projects by fostering strong relationships with clients and engaging with policymakers. Through proactive advocacy and strategic collaboration, CECA represents members' interests on procurement, fair payment, and regulatory frameworks. This pillar also monitors market conditions and supports visibility of future workloads, helping civil engineering contractors plan effectively. By aligning industry needs with government strategy, CECA drives a stable and productive environment for delivering national infrastructure.



SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL VALUE

CECA's work in the sustainability and social value space ensures that our members are positioned to implement sustainable practices across the sector, decarbonising operations, and increasing the social value of the schemes that they deliver. In particular, this involves aligning with the Construction Leadership Council's CO_2nstructZero programme, which is working to ensure industry moves towards a net zero future, eliminating diesel use on sites, adopting new technologies and solutions, and engaging in co-ordinated collective action to meet the climate crisis.



HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

CECA's core pillar of Health, Safety & Wellbeing underscores the industry's commitment to protecting its workforce and promoting a culture of care. CECA supports members in maintaining the highest safety standards through guidance, best practice sharing, and proactive engagement on emerging risks. Wellbeing is increasingly integral, with initiatives focusing on mental health, fatigue, and resilience. By championing a safe and supportive working environment, CECA helps ensure civil engineering remains a sustainable and attractive sector for current and future generations.



CAREERS & RECRUITMENT

Careers and Recruitment focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining the next generation of talent in the civil engineering sector. Through engagement with schools, colleges, and industry partners, CECA promotes rewarding career pathways and diverse opportunities. The organisation supports members with resources and campaigns to address skills shortages and increase workforce diversity. By championing inclusive recruitment and skills development, CECA ensures the sector is equipped to deliver future infrastructure and remain competitive in a changing world.



SKILLS & TRAINING

CECA's core pillar Skills & Training focuses on ensuring the civil engineering sector has a highly skilled and future-ready workforce. CECA supports members by promoting lifelong learning, upskilling opportunities, and access to quality training programmes. Through collaboration with industry and education partners, CECA helps shape a training landscape that meets evolving needs. This pillar plays a vital role in closing skills gaps, supporting apprenticeships, and fostering innovation - ensuring the workforce is equipped to deliver the UK's infrastructure ambitions effectively and safely.

CLIENTS, POLICY & WORKLOAD – Creating Work Opportunities

CECA South West maintains a regular programme of client engagements annually. These meetings help to build strong collaborative relationships between CECA members and public and private sector customers in our region.

For some CECA members, particularly SMEs, this is an invaluable service since they simply don't have the time or resources to approach potentially new clients on a regular basis. CECA South West does this on their behalf and brings the customers to them. Client liaison meetings and quarterly members' meetings not only keep members informed of the work pipeline but, more importantly, they encourage two-way discussions between members and their customers to bring about a better understanding of each other's concerns, for example around skills shortages, funding constraints and the net zero agenda.

The following pages illustrate the wide range of South West and national clients with whom CECA South West has engaged in 2025.



CECA SW Chair, Abie Hearn with Samantha Howell, Director of Highways and Transport, Wiltshire Council



Above: Robert Richards, Deputy Director Highways and Infrastructure Development at Devon County Council, addressing CECA SW members



Above: CECA SW hosts the CECA Flood and Marine (F&M) Group on a regular basis. Pictured are John Laker, F&M Chair with John Chaplin, Bristol Port Company and Richard Ballantyne, British Ports Association.



Above: CECA members from across the UK attend the CECA Flood & Marine Group, which provides members with up-to-date information on the latest developments in the sector.



Above: CECA's Paul Santer and ICE's Miranda Housden supported Karl Tucker, Chair of the Great South West Partnership, in Parliament earlier in the year.



Stuart Allen (Deputy Director Asset Transformation, Flood & Coastal Risk Management) & Sharna Richings (Delivery Manager, South West / Project & Programme Delivery, Flood and Coastal Risk Management) of the Environment Agency, addressing CECA SW members



babcock™



Above and Above Left: Babcock's Infrastructure Director, John Oliver, updated CECA SW members on developments taking place in Devonport Dockyard's nuclear submarine base.



CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE TRUST

Left: Trish Johnson, Bridge Master for the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust presented to SW members in June. Opened in 1864, the bridge was built to a design by William Henry Barlow and John Hawkshaw, based on an earlier design by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It is a Grade I listed building and forms part of the B3129 highway.



Above: Phil Mason, Strategic Director for Sustainable Growth and Development, Cornwall Council, & Tim Mulholland of Treveth Holdings, addressing CECA SW members.

CORNWALL COUNCIL
one and all • onen hag oll



Left: Matthew Cosby, Chief Technology Officer, Goonhilly Earth Station Ltd enlightened SW members on the strategic importance of Goonhilly in the global space programme.

Right: Rebecca Kinnersley-Fowler and Natalie Gale-Sides, both senior project managers, presented on behalf of North Somerset Council.



North Somerset Council



agratas
A TATA Enterprise

Above: Nick Cooper of Agratas spoke about the opportunities for CECA SW members at the new electric car battery manufacturing plant under construction at Bridgwater.



Devon County Council

Above: DCC Surfacing Framework Meeting: CECA SW and Devon County Council jointly hosted thirty contractors at Glendinning's offices in Exeter to capture feedback on how the current surfacing framework is working and inform best procurement and contractual practice for the new framework proposed.



Regular face-to-face liaison with the above organisations by CECA South West's Director Paul Santer also helped to consolidate a good level of understanding and cooperation between CECA members and their potential or existing customer base over the course of 2025

CAREERS & RECRUITMENT - Creating a Talent Pipeline

CECA is proud to have a hugely proactive and enthusiastic South West Foundations Group (SWFG) comprising young engineers and technicians from member companies who visit schools and colleges, giving presentations and attending careers fairs, in order to promote the benefits of a career in civil engineering.

The Group also hosts a stand at the two-day National Apprenticeship Show in Exeter every year and engages with hundreds of school children and their teachers at this event - which often results in a follow-up organised visit to their school(s) and numerous requests to connect potential young apprentices with CECA SW member companies.

The Group has been established for eight years now and continues to go from strength to strength with new members coming on board all the time. At the other end, long serving Group members find they need to pull away from regular activities because of increasing responsibility in their day job.

ceca
South West Foundations

ceca
South West Foundations



Harry Blannin, TMS



Peter Boden, M Group



Ely Coleman, BAM/Plymouth University



Jake Danson, Suttles



Stella Fisher, MJ Church



Walker Grevel, M Group



Mahmoud Hussain, M Group



Max James, Bridge



Fergus Longbottom, BAM



Ben Reynolds, Bridge/Plymouth University



Henry Staley, BAM



Josh Vivian, Kier



Jack Walker, Kier



Lucy Walker, Bridge



Dan Wardrobe, Griffiths



Mike Wilcox, Kier



Matt Zielinski, Kier/Plymouth University

*Later in 2026, the **CECA South West Foundations Group** looks forward to welcoming Tom Appleyard and Ryan Etherington of TMS; Charles Vatcher of M Group; and Nia Hilling and Charlie Pearce of Alun Griffiths, all of whom will be joining the Group for the first time.*

CECA SW FOUNDATIONS GROUP MEMBERSHIP

CAREERS & RECRUITMENT - Creating a Talent Pipeline





Above & above right: CECA South West's stand at the National Apprenticeship Show at Sandy Park in Exeter. SWFG members, Mike Wilcox and Max James hosted on Day 1.



Above: SWFG's Jack Walker and Peter Boden hosted on Day 2 of the National Apprenticeship Show.

THE NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SHOW



Above: SWFG's Mahmoud Hussain and Ben Reynolds were on hand at the annual careers' fair at Spires College in Torquay.



Above and Below Right: the CECA South West Foundations Group on a site visit to Bristol's historic Clifton Suspension Bridge.





Above: SWFG at Cornish Concrete Products' production plant.

Left: A visit to National Highways' Regional Operations Centre in Bristol was a highlight in SWFG's calendar.















From top left, clockwise: Exeter Quay was the choice for a SWFG summer social; Max James fronting the SWFG stand at Bridgwater & Taunton College's careers' fair at Cannington; SWFG's Max James, Ely Coleman and Josh Vivian at Plymouth University's CivSoc careers' fair; the CECA SWFG Christmas Dinner; and Suttles' Tom Osborne presenting to Colyton Grammar School pupils in December (Tom is a former pupil at Colyton). Far left: Bridge's Lucy Walker fronted the SWFG stand at Exeter School's careers' fair.

CAREERS & RECRUITMENT - Where Are They Now?

Lights, Camera, Action!

In the summer, CECA SW produced its third video to complete the trilogy, this time focussing on three previous CECA SW 'Young Achievers' award winners and charting the rapid progress in their careers since then. The idea was to demonstrate that if you've got the drive and ambition to succeed in our industry, then nothing can hold you back! Our three young achievers, now movie stars, are Mike Wilcox (Kier), Molly McMaster (VolkerStevin) and Mahmoud Hussain (M Group). To view the video, please visit this link, or click the icon above: https://bit.ly/4rS7iG9.









Filming took place at Kier's flood alleviation contract at Ottery St. Mary in Devon; VolkerStevin's Coastal Defence Scheme in Southsea; and at M Group's A382 highway improvement scheme in Devon. Individual interviews were filmed in the studio.









CAREERS & RECRUITMENT - Creating a Talent Pipeline



Above: CECA SW members and fellow civil engineering professionals celebrating at the University students' Poster Day which showcased their final year dissertations.



Above: SWFG's Mike Wilcox presented a cheque for £100 to Jack Moore for his dissertation entitled 'A Laboratory Investigation into Woody Debris in Rivers'.

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Right: Members of the University's Industrial Advisory Committee who meet to ensure that industry and academia are working well together and achieving the right outcomes for graduates. Several CECA SW members sit on this committee.





Above: CECA SW Chair, Abie Hearn and Professor Jon Miles in the wave tank laboratory, prior to judging the Plymouth University 'Best Student Placement' prize, as part of our 'Young Achievers' awards.

SKILLS & TRAINING - Creating a Skilled Workforce

Training Hours Delivered: 5,528

Number of People Trained: 853

CECA South West delivers a full and varied programme of training courses for its members - ranging from NEC4 Contract Conditions through to Temporary Works Coordinator/Supervisor and SMSTS/SSSTS health and safety sessions; from Management of Quality/Subcontractors/Risk through to Effective Communication training and from a highly respected Management Development NVQ Level 6 & 7 programme to New Entrants' Practical Skills and Site Surveying residential courses at the National Construction College in Bircham Newton.

CECA training professionals **Glenn Hide (GMH Planning)** and **Bob Bilbrough (Robert Bilbrough Associates)** deliver the majority of these courses together with **2020 Safety Solutions**. There are also health and safety mock trials and legal training webinars available to members via our legal partners, **DAC Beachcroft**.



Bob Bilbrough (Robert Bilbrough Associates)



Lucy Hudson, CECA's Training Co-ordinator



Glenn Hide (GMH Planning)



Above: CECA SW has a seat on the board of AccXel. AccXel's MD, Natalie King and CECA SW's Paul Santer spoke on a South West Infrastructure Partnership panel at Bath University which focussed on skills and training in the supply chain.



Above and left: Best practice bid writing courses were held throughout the year at CECA SW's Exeter office.



Proposed New South West Civil Engineering Training Hub:

CECA members are getting closer to having their own bespoke training hub for groundworkers and plant operators in the South West. Bridge Civil Engineering will provide the premises and external training area at its head office in Chudleigh, training provision will come from AccXel and contractor support is guaranteed via CECA SW members.

A recent CECA SW survey to members has helped to shape the content of the proposed apprenticeship(s), fully aligned to employer needs. The proposal is currently going through planning and has received encouraging support from Teignbridge DC, the newly formed Devon & Torbay Combined Authority, National Highways and the South West Business Council. A recent visit from **Shadow Chancellor, Sir Mel Stride** to Bridge's offices has helped this initiative gain further traction.



Above: CECA South West members attending a bid writing best practice course in Exeter.



Above: Suttles' MD and CECA SW member, Joe Paine chairs the Green Skills Advisory Panel in Dorset which brings together local industry leaders and experts to shape the future of green construction across the region. CECA SW members on the panel include Mildren and Blanchard Wells, alongside Suttles and Paul Santer.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING - Creating a Safer Workplace



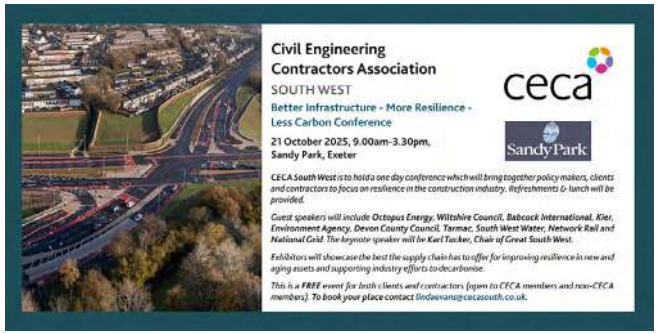


In addition to the extensive health, safety and wellbeing training delivered to CECA members throughout the year, CECA SW, in conjunction with its legal partner DAC Beachcroft, developed and staged a mock trial at Sandy Park which focussed on accidents in and around construction plant on site. Once again, Judge Don Higgs presided (below); over 50 CECA SW members attended the trial.





SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL VALUE - Creating a Better Environment For All



CECA SW's '**Better Infrastructure – More Resilience – Less Carbon**' conference in October drew over 100 delegates (and several exhibitors) to Sandy Park in Exeter to learn how clients and contractors alike are addressing and overcoming the challenges of climate change and carbon emissions.

The conference invited expert speakers in their field who were grouped into three distinct sectors:

- Water and the Environment
- Transportation
- Energy & Defence

Each speaker explained how his or her organisation was 'building in' adaptation strategies to combat the challenges of flooding, storm damage and ageing infrastructure whilst innovating to reduce carbon and promote more sustainable methodologies. A Q&A session followed each sector group's presentations.









Better Infrastructure - More Resilience - Less Carbon Speakers

CECA South West were delighted to host the following speakers at our flagship 2025 conference from the following organisations:

- *Great South West*
- *South West Water*
- *Wiltshire Council*
- *Environment Agency*
- *Kier Natural Resources*
- *Devon County Council*
- *National Highways*
- *Network Rail*
- *Bristol Port Company*
- *Babcock International*
- *National Grid*
- *Octopus Energy*
- *Tarmac*

SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL VALUE - Creating a Better Environment For All



Above: CECA SW members raised over £4,400 for local charity, Pete's Dragons, which helps anyone impacted by suicide loss.

PETE'S DRAGONS
www.petesdragons.org.uk



Above: SWIP Conference - CECA SW supports the ICE's South West Infrastructure Partnership which recently hosted a series of workshops to explore the challenges of delivering resilient, sustainable and effective infrastructure in our region. Paul Santer helped to facilitate these workshops.

CECA SOUTH WEST 'YOUNG ACHIEVERS' LUNCH 2025

Every year, CECA SW hosts this lunchtime event in Torquay which recognises young talent in our industry. Each winner receives a cheque for £750 and a glass trophy presented by the SW Chair in front of 230 senior figures from the region's client and contractor community. This year, our guest speaker was Sean Langan, a documentary film-maker who specialises in reporting from behind enemy lines.



Above: CECA SW's 'Young Achievers' award winners for 2025: ***Jake Martin, Matt Zielinski, Niamh Butterfield, Michael Reynolds*** *and* ***Henry Staley***



Above: 2025 Guest Speaker Sean Langan.

Below: CECA's very own Linda Evans, Leone Donnelly, Kerry Milne and Lucy Hudson receiving their bouquets from Past CECA SW Chair Dave Ellis (Bridge Civil Engineering)









Above, L to R: ***Michael Reynolds*** *was voted Most Promising Apprentice;* ***Henry Staley****, recipient of the Most Promising Trainee Civil Engineer award; and Suttles' Nick Olds and Livvy Williams in deep conversation*



Above: SWFG's Mike Wilcox, Walker Grevel and Mahmoud Hussain talking SW infrastructure; Right: Paul Santer flanked by award winners and members of the CECA SW Foundations Group (SWFG).





Above: CECA SW Past Chair, Phil Ramsden, welcomes guests. Below: University of Bath's Best Student Placement award went to Niamh Butterfield, pictured here with past chairs, Phil Ramsden and Dave Ellis



CECA SW Past Chair, Dave Ellis delivering his keynote speech



Above: Over 230 guests attended the 'Young Achievers' event.

Below: Matt Zielinski picked up Plymouth University's Best Student Placement prize





LOOKING AHEAD IN 2026:

CECA SOUTH WEST TO WELCOME NEW REGIONAL DIRECTOR HANNAH JONES





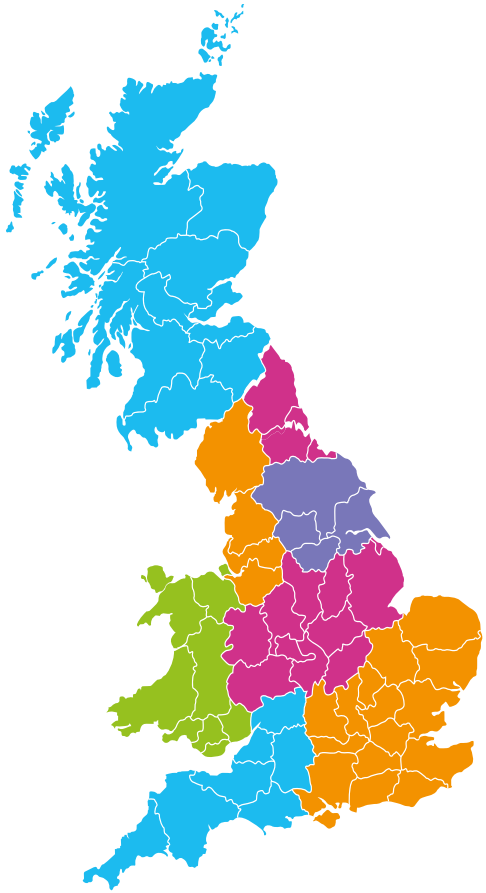
Above: Current CECA SW Director, Paul Santer will hand over the reins to his successor, ***Hannah Jones*** *in April 2026. Paul is retiring after nine years' service. Above right: CECA SW Office Manager, Linda Evans, will also be retiring in April, with newly-appointed* ***Corrinne Hodge*** *fulfilling this key role.*

CECA South West Policy Roadshow

Right: Roundtable Event 2026: CECA Policy and Public Affairs Director, ***Ben Goodwin****, recently canvassed CECA SW members on what they consider the key messages should be from a regional perspective, for CECA to feed in to Government and other stakeholders in 2026.*



ceca
Working for Infrastructure



Established in **1919** as FCEC

Over **350** member companies

Over **250,000 people** employed by members



Representing c. **80% of civil engineering activity** in the UK

Member activity equates to over **£35 billion** per annum

REGIONS & DEVOLVED NATIONS

CECA members are supported by a network of six regional offices across England, a policy office in Westminster, and offices in the devolved nations of Scotland and Wales.

CECA's regions and devolved nations are:

- CECA Scotland
- CECA North West
- CECA North East
- CECA Yorkshire & The Humber
- CECA Wales
- CECA Midlands
- CECA Southern
- CECA South West

CECA (South West) Office 3, First Floor
Alphinbrook Business Centre
Alphinbrook Road Marsh Barton
Exeter EX2 8QR

T. 07827 314880
E. paulsanter@cecasouth.co.uk

www.ceca.co.uk

CECA South West

Cover image: Anaerobic Digestion Plant in Parley, Dorset for Eco Sustainable Solutions, courtesy of Dan Boorn, Mildren Construction

