

## **“Looking to the Future”**

### **Welcome address to Yunnan Delegation**

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

I begin by expressing sincere thanks to two parties. Firstly, we must thank the Institute of Construction Management, particularly to Roy Blamey and David F Jones, the ICM Director of Education and Training. In the construction and design sectors, education and training are vitally important as we look to the future. To those who say: “What happens if I train my staff and they go and work for somebody else?”, I say: “What happens if you do not train them and they continue working for you?”.

Secondly, we are grateful to the Yunnan Design Institute Group who have come all the way from Yunnan to Sandwich, a distance of 8,600 kms, by air as measured along the great circle route. To those who say Kunming Changshui International Airport does not have any direct airlink to East Kent, I say look to the future. In 2022, Manston Airport will open for international aviation with a runway capable of receiving the largest commercial aircraft currently flying.

Over 400,000 tons of cargo left Kunming Changshui International Airport in 2018. Looking to the future, we would be happy for some of it to come our way from 2022. The first steel modular house in East Kent was built a few kilometres from here. It was manufactured and designed in China to British specifications. It arrived on site in three containers. From the moment the containers were opened to the roof being weather-proof took 9 days; first and fast, an excellent example of East Kent and China working together.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017, a freight train left Yiwu in China carrying 44 containers. It arrived in London 17 days later. After leaving 10 containers in Duisberg in Germany, 34 containers arrived at the London Eurohub Terminal on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The train journey took half as long as it would have done by ship.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a reality and we in East Kent want to be on that belt and on that silk road.

Why do we want to be part of the modern Silk Road?

East Kent is the closest part of Britain to mainland Europe and whatever happens in the Brexit negotiations, that will not change.

East Kent likes to be first. It was the first place in Britain to be visited by Julius Caesar in 55 BC; it was the first place in Britain where Augustine landed in 597 AD; it was the first and still is the only place in Britain to have a fast train link to London. More lorries pass through East Kent's Port of Dover than at any other port in Britain, an average of 7,000 per day carrying 17% of the UK's trade in goods. The Channel Tunnel, which links East Kent's Folkestone to Sangatte in France, carries 26% of the trade between the UK and the European Union.

Looking to the future, we wish East Kent to be the first in working collaboratively on construction, design and competency registration projects with ICM and the Yunnan Design Institute Group Company Ltd.

For all these reasons and many more, we are delighted to welcome the Yunnan Design Institute Group to East Kent, to Sandwich and to Innovation House at Discovery Park where we are looking to the future in the hope and expectation of working with you on new initiatives that will be of benefit to us all. I invite David F Jones to begin our session.

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