

# FOCUS ON CRANE INTEREST GROUP (CIG)

**Following on from our features on the Special Interest Groups introduced in the CPA Bulletin last year, it's time to put the spotlight on the Crane Interest Group, otherwise known as CIG.**

CIG is chaired by Peter Gibbs who is Chief Executive Officer of Ainscough Crane Hire. Peter has worked for Ainscough Crane Hire for the past four years and was first appointed as Chief Operating Officer before being made CEO two years later.

Prior to joining Ainscough Crane Hire, Peter worked across the distribution and logistics sector for companies such as Brakes and he also served 17 years with the British Armed Forces. During his time with the military, he became an Army Pilot and headed up the Military Aviation Standards wing, and his experience in aviation safety practices has served him well since he entered the cranes sector.



Peter Gibbs  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ainscough Crane Hire

## Best Practice

Peter has been involved with the CPA and CIG ever since he first joined Ainscough Crane Hire in 2018, and he often attends best practice forums such as the Lead Appointed Persons (AP) Forum. Peter was appointed CIG Chair in October 2020, so his tenure as Chair has been during the COVID pandemic which itself has created several challenges.

The Crane Interest Group comprises a Steering Group Committee which meets at least twice a year, and there is also an annual open meeting. Once actions have been set by the Steering Group

Committee, sub-committees are set up as required to help deliver these actions and the group is also supported by the CPA technical expert team.

COVID has impacted on face-to-face meetings being held over the last 18 months or so, but the last open meeting was held in October 2021 in a hybrid format. Members could attend in person or virtually via zoom. CIG members represent over 80% of the cranes that operate in the UK and a total of 12 crane operators are represented on the Steering Group Committee, such as Mammoet, King Lifting, Liebherr, Bronzeshield and Select.

## The Only National Crane Interest Body

Peter told us: "The Crane Interest Group is the only national crane interest body that is able to collectively represent and support the interests of our entire industry. We're able to consider key issues relating to crane operations, wider equipment and planning standards, and we perform an important function in ensuring these standards are adopted to ensure operations can be conducted safely and effectively.

"We're also the voice of the industry to help influence other trade industry bodies or Government departments, and we play a key role in raising awareness and communicating with the wider construction industry. There is no other body that represents the mobile crane sector in the UK."

Peter himself has been recognised with a prestigious accolade in recognition of both his personal commitment to safety and Ainscough's wider 'Make the Safe Choice' culture. In December 2021 Peter received the Sir Moir Lockhead Safety Award which celebrates individuals across the world who have delivered tangible leadership in safety. Award winners are commended for their work in driving safety initiatives or innovation, safety invention, or for safety leadership, either within the winner's company or wider industry.

## Taking the Lead With CAP1096

CIG took the lead on liaising with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regarding CAP1096, whereby the CAA were looking to follow European legislation and implement substantial changes to the height restrictions and reporting of cranes anywhere in the UK.

Thanks to interventions from the CIG, CPA and other trade associations, the CAA re-evaluated the proposals and a phased approach has now been adopted, running trials with crane owners, contractors and others.

Peter told us: "CAP1096 would have had a major impact on the construction industry if it was implemented in its original format. Whilst the principal responsibility for height notification of cranes sits with our customers across the sector, the expertise and understanding around the requirements the CAA wanted to put in place, clearly sits with bodies like the Crane Interest Group.





Ainscough Crane Hire has recently invested £30m as part of its crane investment programme. The company already has the largest crane fleet in the UK

“Supported by the CPA, the CIG very much took a lead with engaging with the CAA. Interestingly, my background proved useful as I used to be a Military Pilot and was responsible for standards, so that helped facilitate mutual understanding. CAP1096 was due to be imposed on the sector from April 2021 and it would have affected every single lift in the country, but it’s now been re-evaluated by the CAA and trials have been run with alternative measures that are more practical.

“This was a defensive intervention but an important one. Without the CIG this would not have happened and it’s very likely we would have been living with a legal requirement that would have had significant consequences across the construction industry.”

## Roadworthiness Document

CIG also worked closely with the CPA regarding the introduction of the new 2021 CPA Model Conditions to ensure that everything representing mobile cranes was considered, and the group is introducing a roadworthiness document for mobile cranes.

This follows the introduction of the voluntary MOT scheme that was originally introduced by the CPA in 2019, to address the fact that mobile cranes are exempt from mandatory MOT testing. The Roadworthiness Scheme extends the previous MOT scheme to cover all aspects of annual servicing which aligns to DVSA’s (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) focus on year round roadworthiness.

The new document will be endorsed by the DVSA and although the scheme still remains voluntary, the new document will introduce a formal standard that the whole mobile crane sector can work to.

In addition, the CIG is working alongside local authorities regarding clean air zones, and the group has worked with the CPA on the recent training needs survey. In recent months, one of CIG’s objectives has been to establish formal liaisons with wider interest groups across construction, both in the UK and worldwide, to help cascade information to key target markets and to form alliances when required.

For instance, CIG worked very closely alongside the Lead AP Forum to generate feedback from many of the largest construction companies in the country to communicate with one voice the objections to the original format of CAP1096. Outside the UK, CIG has links with organisations such as ESTA, the European association for the abnormal road transport and mobile crane rental industry, who are working on developing a European operators’ crane licence (ECOL).

Peter added: “It’s all about best practice and supporting crane operators working to a consistent, safe standard, not just in the UK, but across Europe and worldwide. It also means that supply of qualified and competent labour is easier if international crane operators are working to a consistent and endorsed standard.”



## Removal of Red Diesel

Peter also talked about the removal of the red diesel rebate and the concerns that the sector has about the switch from red diesel before the 1st April 2022 deadline.

“The CPA has led the industry response to the removal of red diesel, with CPA Chief Executive Kevin Minton engaging closely with the CIG and ensuring we have had a good voice to express and mitigate our key concerns. We had particular concerns that a lot of cranes can run on a tank of diesel for a significant period of time when on a construction site, creating a significant operational issue on 1st April when fuel is due to be switched.

“So the CIG becomes a forum whereby we’re able to communicate our concerns to the Treasury and make sure that in the red diesel removal transition plan, practical considerations have been taken into account to allow crane operators to make the transition in a sensible manner. This avoids having to go to the expense of removing red diesel that operators have currently got in their cranes, and wash tanks out, and undertake activity that would interrupt operations and cost a significant amount of expense. We’re also considering the transition to net zero and we’re closely aligned to the CPA with that,” he said.

So what are the latest projects and initiatives that the CIG is working on? Peter referred to the fact that the very latest cranes tend to have variable ballast, variable outriggers and variable wind loading factors.

So whereas in the past where a lift is being planned on a site, a range of people would be able to plan a lift and easily identify the best crane to use based on the set lift capability. However, with the newest cranes, there are innumerable variations of a lift capability due to the three variable factors of ballast, outriggers and wind loading factors influencing the optimum selection of crane. This means that planning can be much more bespoke to optimise each individual job.

## Importance of Apprenticeships and Training

Peter also cited the importance of apprenticeships and training. He told us: “As a business, Ainscough Crane Hire is focusing on apprenticeships, recognising the need to develop a future pipeline of operators, and we are working with the CPA to develop and champion best practice apprentice programmes.

“With regards to training, we know that labour is becoming an issue and we have a unique position to be able to provide the experience and competency around specialist, and indeed general, lift training. Working with the CPA and the Lead AP Forum, we can consider formal standards of training such as what qualifications crane operators should have, best practice training or familiarisation training. The whole space of training and the development of competency and expertise is high on the agenda.”

Peter talked about concerns relating to the reduced level of experienced labour supply, both within the mobile crane industry and the wider construction sector.

“What we’re seeing at the moment across construction is a combination of an aged workforce, the COVID impact with some people retiring after furlough ended, and Brexit, where we lost much of our European labour. When you consider all these factors

Ainscough Crane Hire supported the installation of the 23m high Hope Sculpture in the woodland park of Cuningar Loop, part of Clyde Gateway, Scotland’s biggest regeneration programme



in a market where demand is growing, and where it’s expected to increase even further with the ‘Build Back Better’ Government investment plan, there’s an awful lot of labour pressure coming into our sector.

“At Ainscough we’ve been involved in a number of major projects over the last year or so where the customer has come to us to ask for significant additional expertise in order to allow them to continue to carry on with their project. On major projects where there are hundreds of people involved, there may be a proportion of operatives who have the basic qualification, but they don’t have what is a good level of experience and competency to operate effectively and safely in a more complex lifting environment.”

## New Members Welcome

All CPA members are welcome to get involved in CIG and Peter urged interested parties to either get in touch with himself at [p.gibbs@ainscough.co.uk](mailto:p.gibbs@ainscough.co.uk) or the CPA’s Rob Squires at [rob.squires@cpa.uk.net](mailto:rob.squires@cpa.uk.net)

Peter added: “A crane is not a commodity and we operate a critical service across the construction sector. We provide a safe lifting service to our customers and having wider members of the CPA interested and involved in CIG matters, working with us and influencing our direction of travel, this can only be good for the whole construction industry.

“There is not a single major construction project that I can think of in the UK that doesn’t require lift at some point. Whether it be a crawler crane, a mobile crane, a tower crane, or even a combination of all three. Having wider CPA engagement is very welcome within the CIG.”