

Hat trick

Diane Dumashie, Vice President of the International Federation of Surveyors, talks to Abigail Tomkins

FOR someone who began her surveying life in ‘general practice’, Diane Dumashie has made an extraordinary career. One that has led to her current role as vice president of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG). Her multiple roles with FIG stem from her being the head of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors delegation who, along with ICES, make up the UK representatives within the international arena. She sits on RICS governing council, has advised international donor agency directors and managers, including the United Nations, and has led government bodies through the business of strategic change. She will happily admit that she thrives on meetings.

To some, the myriad organisations that govern and shape the built environment professions are a mine of under achieving meetings that huff and puff and ultimately go nowhere. To Diane Dumashie, these organisations are the ones that shape change, that influence and can positively affect people’s lives. As she says, in land and the built environment, work is about people, places and power. Surveyors needs people like Diane Dumashie to champion their corner and continue to ensure their work is a force for good.

Diane Dumashie talks to CES about working across two continents and her new challenge as vice president of FIG

How has your career developed to where you are today?

Starting in the days when RICS was organised into divisions, I was a general practice surveyor. I began in a commercial asset management consultancy in London, then moved into land and property acquisitions and development in the corporate retail and hotel sector, rising to property director. Once I completed my PhD in business strategy and coastal policy and planning, I then stepped back into consultancy, initially with one of the big Mayfair firms. Then, some 15 years ago, I established an independent practice that saw me working in both the southwest UK and Africa, mostly for donor agency and public sector clients.

My key motivation has always been to grow and expand my expertise in order to give back a better and more capable and rounded service to clients. It is an ongoing development! Essentially, it sees me wearing three different hats. I have my UK-centric work in brownfield development and regeneration; land governance and institutional development in Africa; and master planning and institutional responsibilities in the coastal zone and waterfront industry worldwide.

My international interests in research and consultancy combine all three of my hats. I can now provide expertise in the areas of African land issues; land and property development and economic regeneration; as well as related institutional development and training. I recently established the Leadership 4 Change partnership specifically for African businesses, professionals and community groups.

The underlying theme throughout my career has always been people, places and — as you realise in land and the built environment — ultimately power. Projects are often about using effectively my mediation, negotiation and facilitation skills.

You’ve worked for large corporate entities like Marks and Spencer, and for coastal communities in Africa, how did you handle such a change in culture?

In our profession it is all about people. It is about how we set our rules of governance, how these rules link to culture and, in turn, how we organise ourselves on and over land. Whether it is the micro organisational culture or the wider macro country culture, the same principles of working with people in places apply.

My role, wherever I am based, is to apply clarity of understanding of the client and project needs within the cultural context; then defining the purpose, and identifying and articulating the real objective — this is imperative for programme success.

And, in Africa, quite honestly my parental background has given me a head start. I have Ghanaian and British parents and have grown up travelling between the two countries, in and out of two family cultures!

What about Africa is important to you?

I am passionate in my commitment to helping sub Saharan African professionals and communities work towards finding ways to address poverty. As a professional in land

economics, there are numerous ways to make a difference. This includes gender equal approaches in land and property to ensure equity in title, policy and implementation; or investigating the impact of using traditional building materials and methods for house construction; or in policy pin-pointing how to unlock the supply of land for houses targeted at middle income communities. Indeed, all my senior responsibilities within FIG have had Africa at the core.

How has your involvement with FIG developed?

I've recently been elected as vice president of FIG for a four-year term, but my experience with the organisation goes back a long way. I started by (unusually) serving two terms as the elected chair for commission 8 (spatial planning and development), followed by a further four years as chair of an international task force focusing on Africa. This meant providing leadership through a combination of applied land economics and debating approaches such as futures scenarios.

What do you hope to achieve in your role as FIG vice president?

I very much want my professional experience to benefit the membership — essentially this means clarity in purpose, and I hope I can contribute to FIG outputs being results orientated.

Specifically, my VP role is responsible for leading the 10 FIG commission chairs. I hope to achieve this by supporting the commission work plans, liaising with each chair and, ultimately, chairing the advisory council to facilitate sharing and building upon their collective experiences.

I am also responsible for exploring (and hopefully leading) a new network that has spun out of the success of the Africa Task Force. The Regional Capacity Network for Africa is to be taken to the FIG general assembly for endorsement at our next working week in Sofia this May.

How important is FIG as an organisation?

Essentially, the role of FIG is to harness professional, institutional, and global development, as well as networking and providing a platform to share good practice through the range of technical commissions, networks and task forces.

Over the decades, FIG has placed itself and proved itself as a productive members' organisation and is regularly called upon by international organisations to partner in activities.

You chaired the FIG Africa Task Force for five years, did you achieve everything you hoped to? Will it have a lasting legacy?

The proof of this pudding is our achievements. Over 12 African countries actively participated in the four-year term of the task force. We held three annual workshops across the continent and had over 160 attendees in the capacity programme. Most importantly, it was a knowledge exchange platform, as well as networking African land professionals across the continent.

Another success was that we were able to link senior surveyors to those at the start of their careers, because of the active participation of the FIG Young Surveyors network. I truly thank all those who participated, because the gains made were not achievable without them. FIG and its members certainly viewed it as a success and is proposing it as a template for other world regions to follow.

Have any particular moments stood out in your career?

Programme and project working is always exciting, especially within my three hats! But I have particularly enjoyed the fact that my experience has meant I have been invited to join a range of boards and panels. Alongside my positions at RICS and FIG, I am a member of the UN Habitat advisory group on gender issues, advising the UN executive director on securing gender equality in land tenure. Closer to home, I always enjoy the regional aspect of institutions and try to attend some RICS South West events.



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What has been the most challenging job you've worked on?

My working life has presented me with many challenges, but I do like creating simplicity out of complexity. This often applies to the projects I work on. Creating a clear path to deliver objectives is so rewarding. It is often those projects with a strong engineering discipline that present the greatest challenges.

I was working on a heavily industrialised site that required a strategic direction. Hiring specialist port economists and engineers enabled me to develop a master plan to create added value for the client landowner. The results unwrapped the potential to develop the port to handle liquefied natural gas, but this was not the entire picture... a detailed business case revealed that the commercial risk was too high. In hindsight, with today's scenario of an LNG market with high supply and low demand, it fortuitously proved to be the right decision not to go ahead.

You describe yourself as 'specialising in the logistics of change', what do you mean by this?

I'm aware that can come across as jargon! What I mean is change in the way people live and work and, consequently, the future demand for land and property. In our profession, getting this to translate into our members' realities is important.

I concur with business research from Professor Lynda Gratton that shows five trends that will affect the way we work; technology, globalisation, demography, big society and energy resources. Each of these broad headings in one form will shape the upcoming decades of all our working lives.

On the face of it, most will already and immediately see the trend changes in these areas, but taking this thought more deeply and further is the fundamental relevance to both our professional practices and how it relates to people — how they operate and the places they live, work and play, i.e the very essence of our professional sphere.

So, my aim is to be creative and strategic to help clients (individuals or organisations) to lead and manage change, to energise and resolve complex issues and deliver successful outcomes for all stakeholders. It is a field rich for knowledge transfer and I have found myself designing and facilitating workshops for national and government officers, and grassroots organisations, and also leading professional study visits for business and ministry senior teams to assess their strategic next steps.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing surveying globally right now?

Taking a cue from Professor Gratton, the impact of the five key futures will vary country to country. Some professionals are struggling to handle the economic crisis, while others are handling explosive growth. Added to this are vastly different demographic situations; with strong urbanisation or an aging society being just two of the challenges faced. That said, one constant I would

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promote is the range of knowledge of land and engineering professionals, who have to handle the technological push and the fast evolving demands of society and ongoing globalisation.

Clearly with a back drop such as this, there are plenty of issues, but the key challenge I would focus on in relation to the sustainability of our profession is how we encourage the young to enter the profession. Of course, this is a challenge faced by all professions. We have to ask ourselves; do we prepare the next generation well enough in not only education and knowledge transfer, but also attitude? To me, finding a way that established professionals can proactively mentor is very important — so much so it is to be the next theme for FIG's Regional Capacity Network for Africa to address later in 2015.

Ultimately, our professional associations are there to reshape professional responsibilities and accountabilities in line with the needs of society.

Diane's List

Book Autobiographies, books on land and natural resource economics, and humour

Film Heroic drama, especially if it's based on true historical facts

Country In Ghana I feel at home; in Hawaii I love the surf; and the UK is my motherland

Food In Ghana I love Okro Stew with Banku. In the UK, a roast lamb dinner

Buildings I love Gaudi's work in Barcelona and I always find myself drawn to lighthouses

Diane Dumashie, Vice President of the International Federation of Surveyors, was talking to Abigail Tomkins
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 www.dumashie.co.uk
 www.fig.net/africatakforce

The (CES) social network



Moving offices in Leeds today odd treasure trove... an ancient pager, photo of a now dead friend, 1st scientific paper draft, Amazon artifact

@SimonLLewis



Has anyone heard of 3D projectors being used to display BIM models? If so, WHERE? Please provide as much information as possible.

Thomas Stevens
BIM Experts

I am going to slip made up acronyms in all my future presentations and see if anyone ever questions them.

@NigelPDavies

The first construction project to be completed in the Philippines in 2016 using #NEC3 contract is Manila Harbor bit.ly/1vXFtPR

@nec_contracts

I have done the TBM project and I have heard the term "Wriggle Survey". But I don't know its definition. Can somebody help to explain it?

Ng Guan Nan
Surveying Engineers Jobs & Employment Worldwide

Don't trust auto save... Hours of work gone. :-(

@bookofthefuture

Orwell line about pubs perfectly describes the best parts of Britain's rail infrastructure 'solid, comfortable ugliness of the 19th century'

@MDMuk



In the wake of the devastation caused by Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, RedR is sending experts on food, shelter, water, and child protection.

RedR UK

Surveying in one of my favourite cities but the weather isn't being very kind today #laserscanning #York #wet

@CTSurveys

Pratchett Quotes For Engineers <http://www.beingbrunel.com/terry-pratchett/>

@beingbrunel

We all have a story to tell... That's why we brought together our chairman (and former apprentice) Allan Cook, and Lewis Wade, a first-year #apprentice, to share their experiences. Watch Allan and Lewis in conversation... <http://socsi.in/zZbBG>

Atkins