

National Highways

Connecting the Country

S01E04

SPEAKERS

Malcolm Dare, Mark Round, Bill Hill, Jim Wildman, Nicola Bell, Mark Corbin, Nick Harris, Claudia Davidson

Mark Round 00:00

Hello and welcome to connecting the country, a series of podcasts that explores the future of England's strategic road network, making it safer and more reliable. And we'll be doing this by talking to the people who make those possibilities a reality. I'm Mark round.

Jim Wildman 00:15

And I'm Jim Wildman, and we're your host for this episode of connecting the country. We're both excited to be speaking to you today because we're recording this very special edition, backstage at Highways UK here at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. Before we get into the podcast itself, though, I've got some stats and facts for you about the show to whet your appetite. So you ready?

Mark Round 00:35

I am indeed I love a stack pack.

Jim Wildman 00:37

So we're getting on the show has around 300 exhibitors, that's 7000 people to attend over the two days, the show has 11 conference theatres with 372 speakers across 132 sessions.

Mark Round 00:50

Wow, that's amazing, isn't it? And I'd say you don't actually realise how big the NEC is until you're stood in one of the halls. And of course, it's great to see so many people from the supply chain here in attendance.

Jim Wildman 01:01

It certainly is a now we've set the scene, shall we get into it?

Mark Round 01:05

Yeah, let's do it. And I think we need a drumroll for this part, Jim, although sadly, I don't think our budget quite stretched to a special effects machine. But it's time for the segment of the podcast, which we're calling in conversation with.

Jim Wildman 01:17

It is indeed. And I'm pleased to say that we're joined by someone very important, especially as he's our boss, so we'd best be on our best behaviour. It's none other than national highways chief executive, Nick Harris. Nick, welcome along to the podcast.

Nick Harris 01:29

Brilliant. Thanks. And thanks for the introduction, guys.

Mark Round 01:33

Now, Nick, you've just come off the main stage where you were the keynote speaker, how did you find it?

Nick Harris 01:38

It was great to be there on the stage. This show looks bigger than last year. And last year was quite something because that was the first time we're here together live quite daunting to see that number of people. But again, great to see so many old friends, the opportunity to make new friends. But also it was my opportunity ahead of the panel conversation to lay out what we've been doing. And our thoughts for what's coming next. And what matters for us.

Jim Wildman 02:09

Nick, We're halfway through the second roads period. What have been your highlights today? And what do you think some of the big challenges are that lie ahead?

Nick Harris 02:16

Well, it doesn't time fly, here we are middle of this road period. And going back to April 2020. Seems quite a long way away now. But it's a great moment to reflect on how well we've done and more importantly, where are we going next. So, you know, as I mentioned, on the stage, lots happened in the last two and a half years, we've all dealt really successfully with the challenges that COVID gave us, we kept everything going, we kept the construction sector going. And more importantly, through the resilience of the road network that we will look after we kept the country connected and stuff moving, whether that was vaccines, people essential workers, we have a lot to feel really proud about so. So that was certainly in my thoughts. And then perhaps moving more to the work. Yeah, the environment, quite rightly, has become more and more important in what we do. Everything we're doing, but particularly what we do. And so we have quite rightly had more challenges to get our largest schemes through the planning process. And we work very hard on that. We've worked very hard on that with ourselves and colleagues in the DfT. And on the back of that really good work, we're now getting schemes consented. So we've recently seen schemes on the M25. So junction 10, and 28. And on the M56, A47 consented, good quality consenting letters. So we've not seen challenge on most of them. And that's great news for us and for the sector. And for everyone who will benefit from those schemes. And then looking at how we performed what we've delivered, we're meeting the majority of our targets, despite those planning issues, we're delivering on our capital programmes or maintenance programmes, and then looking to the future. So now, of course, the next road period is top of my mind, top of our minds, and where we're close to or hopefully at the point where we can publish the initial report. So this is the report that kicks off the whole consultation around risk three, it lays out our thoughts, our hopes, aspirations, but a lot of really good open

questions about what should be in that what's our role in supportive freight or electric charging, it talks about the environment a lot, and the need to demonstrate that we can do everything that we want to do. But we can do it in an environmentally sustainable way. And then to support that there are route strategies. So the 20 key routes and the strategies that lie behind them will be published. And then there's a strategic view of the future. So we refresh that every five years. And so we'll refresh that and publish it So we've refreshed it, and we will publish it, giving our view our thoughts to 2050 on the future of transport, and the relevance of of national highways and what we do.

Mark Round 05:11

And you mentioned there, Nick, about the kind of the look looking ahead, as it were, what are we doing to lay the foundations for the government's third road investment strategy for 2025 to 2030? And where are the priorities? Would you say

Nick Harris 05:27

There are a whole range of priorities, but I would say underpinning all of it is, we've got to make the case for investment in roads. And there are a number of elements to that. But But ultimately, we've got to get across that the vast sums of public money that are going to be invested in keeping our roads going and further enhancing them, that there's a good case for that. And I think that if you look at the relevance of roads and everyone's lives, we all use roads, for journeys that connects the countries. Two thirds of all freight journeys take place on our strategic road network, I was looking at some statistics from the north 97% of all journeys take place on roads, ours and the local authority roads, roads matter in our lives. So getting this right matters, we've got to demonstrate we're going to do this in an environmentally sustainable way. So our route to net zero thinking about carbon matters. And of course, if our plans pan out, we will achieve what we need to do in support of the government for carbon budget six, which means that roads will become the greener transport option at some point in the early 2030s. So getting to that point, it matters, as does biodiversity, air quality, water quality, nitrogen, particulates. And as one of the 10 biggest landowners in the UK, we have a moral, a quite rightly, a big obligation on us to show some leadership on how we can manage our soft estate, to connect environments to demonstrate great practice. And as I say, show it show a lead in this. So by doing all of that, by demonstrating why investment roads and roads matters, I think we'll be successful. And I think the final thing I'd mentioned is, we need to lose the inner engineer here. So this is about why. So why are we doing all of this the end of the day, it's about everyone using our network that they have ever safer, and ever more reliable journeys. It's not about what we build, it's about achieving those outcomes. And I think getting that across matters,

Jim Wildman 07:38

Obviously sustainability, then you know, picking up on that it's close to your heart. I mean, just give us a flavour about why it matters to you personally, you know, and obviously, you've explained a little bit more about why it's important for national highways, but pick up on that a little bit more, please.

Nick Harris 07:53

I was reflecting on that a bit the other day, why does it matter so much? To me? And I think, you know, I look back to my childhood, really and think about why ultimately, did I become an engineer? And why have I worked

most of my career in an infrastructure. And I mean, I come from a from a farming background. So the environment mattered, wasn't large farming. And so the environment did matter. And it was a farm in Anglesey were living on the edge of the sea in a beautiful spot, you couldn't fail to appreciate the environment. And that ultimately led me into into engineering and for much of my career, I spent it in the in the water sector were finding balance with nature is was continues to be a key part of the work. And I think that's translated very well into what we're doing here. And national highways, you know, we we have the stewardship of important infrastructure, and its impact on the environment matters. And that's a great responsibility that we have. So I feel that very keenly.

Mark Round 09:03

Now, Nick, thank you for taking the time to join us. Finally, before we let we go, let you go. As we know, you're very busy wrestling all of our contributors today to the podcast. To sum up, what does national highways mean to you? In three words?

Nick Harris 09:18

Wow, there's nothing like being put on the spot is this. So here we are off the top of my head. I'll go with passion, commitment and connection. And I say those three words because I've really been blown away. In the five or six years I've been here with absolute passion for roads and what we do the complete commitment of everyone who works not only in national highways, but in our supply chain to what we do, which is something to be enormously proud of. And connection because what we do matters. It connects the country it supports economic growth, housing, people's lives. It matters. That connection is important. So yep, that was my Three words.

Mark Round 10:00

Nick, thank you for joining us.

Jim Wildman 10:02

So I'm pleased to say we're now joined by Malcolm Dare who is the Executive Director of commercial and procurement and national highways. So Malcom, we heard from Nick earlier talking about a renewed focus on quality. Where do you see the role of supply chain in helping us deliver that ambition?

Malcolm Dare 10:19

The supply chain are vital when you think of our turnover, you know, we're spending a region of about four, four and a half billion a year. And that is with the supply base. So 80 to 90% of our turnover is spent with supply base, if you're going to impact quality, we have to do it in conjunction with the supply base, because they they are the ones that do the work on the ground. If you look at quality from an industry perspective, and the broader civil engineering infrastructures perspective of the Geary initiative, get it right initiative, which everyone is buying into clearly says there's 20% rework. That means there's 20%, wasted cost that we're spending ultimately, and that is due to poor quality. And so in the times we have today, where we're challenged by inflation levels we haven't seen for 1020 years, we're trying to cover the cost of inflation or lean in to help the supply base with inflation. But we can only do that if we generate spare cash. In order to help do that. If we're wasting 20% of our spend on poor quality, then we can't do inflation. So we have to improve quality a because it's the right thing to

do. But B in the short term, we're going to need to generate the savings to help cover the cost of inflation in conjunction with a supply base. So it's absolutely vital.

Mark Round 11:36

And walking around the show. Malcolm it's very clear to see that sustainability is obviously a big part of the show. It is never far from news headlines, particularly when you kind of look at kind of new streams and new channels. lately. Obviously sustainability is also a major priority for for national highways, hey, we're supply chain partners working to help us meet our net zero and biodiversity ambitions.

Malcolm Dare 12:00

So there's two areas with sustainability. One is the phrase that so more Collison has been talking about around just getting the basics right. And getting the basics right includes the quality dimension. For instance, if we really invested in Lean thinking, and lean thinking is all about quality cost delivery, we would make significant savings. And if we're making savings, because we're pouring less concrete, or we're lying less Asheville, we're reducing the carbon content of what we're using on the network. The other angle was sustainability is we're doing a lot of work with the supplier base and with the trade bodies to outline the roadmaps to show how we can take carbon down in the major, the major categories of spin, which is Asheville, concrete, steel, and plant and all of that work is done with the sector. So the phrase I've been using is by the sector for the sector. And that will show how we go from say, you know, 100 100 units of carbon today over the next 10 years down to say 50 units or 30 units of carbon. So the supply base is vital because again, that's where the work is done. And what we're trying to do is catalyse the direction, which the supply base and the industry buy into. So it's not a surprise to people.

Jim Wildman 13:07

And Malcolm just just to expand on that. I mean, obviously how far down the road is it? Where do you think we are now in terms of our our net zero ambitions? And obviously, we've got our targets. But what's your sort of view on now on on our progress today?

Malcolm Dare 13:22

The national highways cabinet is there a plan was published a year ago, a lot of the actions that were laid out in that plan over the last year have been done. From a supply base perspective, the key deliverables now between now and the end of the year is the five carbon reduction plans for the five categories Asheville, concrete, plant, steel, as well as tree planting, which links into the biodiversity piece. Those are due to be published late November. Those are, as I said before, those have been developed by the sector for the sector. And now it's a case of implementing those plans. The absolutely vital part of that is we clear on what we're trying to do as an as the client organisation. And as I was talking on the skanks Gastone this morning, we're giving people lots of visibility of our intent and where we're going. So that as we start to cut in the low carbon alternatives, if people choose not to get on the journey, well, that's their choice. That's absolutely fine. But they must not be surprised when we refuse to do business with people that cannot meet the clearly signposted and the clearly published lower carbon direction that we're going in by the different categories of spend.

Mark Round 14:25

And Malcolm, thank you for taking the time to talk to us here on the on the podcast. And before we let you go, because we know you're you're very busy, as are many of your colleagues here. What three words would you use to sum up national highways and why?

Malcolm Dare 14:40

Land of opportunity phrase I use a lot. There's so many things we can do for the good of the country. Two things I've touched on today, if we get the basics right, we drive productivity, which is absolutely essential for the sector and you listen to the politics of the moment. It's all about growth, which is productivity. And the other land of opportunity is sustainability. We have a real opportunity To change a sector and drive change, I haven't come across anyone that says they can get nuts. But we've got a massive opportunity to make a step change in our approach to carbon in the sector.

Mark Round 15:09

Malcolm, thank you for joining us. Now I'm pleased to say we're joined by a very special guest here on the podcast. It is none other than director of network resilience. Mark Corbin, from transport West Midlands Mark, thanks for joining us.

Mark Corbin 15:23

Thank you very much Mark, It's great to be able to speak to you.

Mark Round 15:26

So just talk to us a little bit about what what you're exhibiting at the show and what people can see if they visit the stands here at highways UK.

Mark Corbin 15:34

Well, we're at J8 and J10. Here is UK we have a transport for West Midlands presence. And it's all about what we're doing in that local road environment space. We've got people talking about our regional transport Coordination Centre, we've got some displays showing how we minimise disruptions everyday in the West Midlands. We're talking about our transport skills Academy, we've got some bikes that people can see what we're doing across our bike hire in the West Midlands, and looking at data and how data is influencing the things that we do in the West Midlands through our regional transport Coordination Centre.

Jim Wildman 16:05

But just tell us a little bit more about the kind of work transport for West Midlands do with partners such as national highways, and others, and obviously, keeping the network moving.

Mark Corbin 16:17

A partnership is is really crucial for what we do in the local road environment. In the West Midlands, you know, we've we are surrounded by the national strategic road network in M6, M5, M40 and M42. And the partnership work that we do with national highways, I think it's quite significant. We have I think we are one of the only places in the country where we have a local presence within the Regional Operations Centre in Quinton. So we have what I think is quite a mature relationship where we share a lot of information, we share a lot of data, we

have, I think, in some ways managed to overcome that challenge of what's going on on local roads. So we are quite open with the way that we've shared with national highways. And they're quite open in the way that they've opened their network to us as well. So I think we have a strong mutual partnership.

Mark Round 17:00

And you mentioned that didn't you some of the key routes, which many of our listeners will be familiar with the M five, the M6 the M42. Obviously, it's been a very important year for Birmingham as a city that the Commonwealth Games, the 50th anniversary of Spaghetti Junction and intertraffic, which were which was great for national highways, what have been some of your highlights from this year? And what will you look back on with with fondness?

Mark Corbin 17:22

I think this year naturally, you know, we have to talk about the Commonwealth Games, I've just been talking about that on our stand and the role that the Regional Transport Coordination Centre played in that successful delivery. I feel for us that was a real important moment, not just for us that transport for West Midlands, but across the whole of the region of the West Midlands where we saw how our partners came together to get behind something, a major event that was being delivered for us and and that had the ability to really galvanise our region and help people to feel really positive and strong about where we live in. And of course, transport was a key factor in delivering that games. And we feel quite proud in the role that not just us that transport for West Midlands and our local authority split. But also partners like national highways, Network Rail, and other partners around who were critical to the success of the delivery of the games was a key highlight.

Mark Round 18:14

And you mentioned there Mark about close collaboration with network rail, you've obviously spoken about the work with with with national highways and the close collaboration there in terms of the control room access, perhaps to some people that there may be a perception sometimes that the left hand doesn't speak to the right hand when it comes to roadworks, but that's not the case. And it seems that that kind of planning really central to to keeping the Midlands network moving.

Mark Corbin 18:37

It's not the case, you know, people often must acknowledge that the road environment is a very dynamic place, no one day is going to be the same. You know, that's either due to incidents happening, or planned maintenance or interventions from utility companies, it's always going to be pretty dynamic. There's a lot of work that happens behind the scenes that people never see. And we are often doing that work to potentially make sure that we're mitigating properly, and that we're not going to introduce pain or cause people's journeys to be quite disruptive. So yes, there's a lot of activity happening across the network. But there's also a lot of people working behind the scenes to collaborate, ensuring that we're working together and trying to make sure that we're making those journeys a lot smoother for people, whether they're on the local or the strategic road network.

Jim Wildman 19:24

Obviously, just anything else you'd reflect on really, is this the model in the Midlands or the West Midlands? Is that something that you perhaps you know, could be reflected elsewhere in the way that we work together?

Mark Corbin 19:35

I think it is, actually, I think it's a really important step that we've taken in the West Midlands to kind of bring the barriers down or less, we are genuinely collaborating as partners ourselves and national highways in the case of roads, we aren't really going to be able to help people to make smoother journeys we have to and I am quite pleased with the approach that we've taken in the West Midlands where we've been very open with national highways. They've been very open with us They're often in our regional transport Coordination Centre. We are often in Quinton. So I think that is a model that absolutely has to be looked at and focused on. Because unless those big partners are together, sharing information for the benefit of the public, we're not going to really see the true tangible improvements that are required across transport.

Mark Round 20:21

Mark, thank you for joining us,

Jim Wildman 20:23

Claudio, thanks for joining us. I'm interested just to find out really how things are going obviously, this is a colossal event. What does it take to, to bring everything together?

Claudia Davidson 20:31

It takes many months of hard work. So I work on this event solely all year round. So the planning for this year's event actually started in July last year, would you believe it? So we plan all our events, 18 months in advance, and just to get the quality that we need? So we've got 380 speakers, charging 30 exhibitors? I think we've just about hit 9000 registrations as well. So yeah, as you can imagine, it takes a whole team behind me to make make this happen.

Jim Wildman 20:57

So successful, then in that respect, and obviously, it's nice to have everyone back together, isn't it really after COVID? and so forth? What What's it? What's it like now, organising such an event like this? You know, after the after the time we've had?

Claudia Davidson 21:11

Yeah, it's just lovely to see people back together. I think you don't get that on these virtual events. I think you bump into people, people are bumping into old colleagues having those connections, and also the speakers as well, you get a lot more interaction from the audience. And yeah, it's very busy. So you get your steps and definitely, but I think yeah, we all know the in person is is definitely back and better than ever, really.

Mark Round 21:31

And it's such a vast venue, isn't it the NEC when you're here, you get a real feel for the for the size and scale of the venue. Why do you think that the show continues to be so popular with people in the highways industry and the supply chain?

Claudia Davidson 21:44

Well, I think obviously, the support of national highways is fantastic. But I think we're also going into new areas. So delving further into the supply chain, we're also getting a lot of traction from local authorities as well, I think what's really important this year is that collaborative piece. So you know, going throughout the supply chain, whether you're public or private sector, whether you're working on the SRN or the local roads, I think that this show, it really has something for everyone, and we are growing with the industry. So I think that's really reflective of why we keep growing every year.

Jim Wildman 22:12

And are there any real highlights for you this year? Claudia

Claudia Davidson 22:16

There's many, No, I think obviously next keynote this morning was fantastic. And we've got some really strong keynotes speakers around reframing road investment. Tomorrow, there's a fantastic panel with Steven Elderkin, around kind of the sustainability in the race to decarbonize roads. And there's other another panel tomorrow, around inclusive mobility in the IETF Theatre, which I think it's gonna be really powerful. That's with Mel Clark, just looking around the user, I think at these events, often sometimes the user gets a little bit lost. And I think we're really bringing that this year to make sure that the use of voices is heard.

Mark Round 22:46

And walking around the show early you couldn't fail to see the kind of the sustainability theme it seems really prominent this year. And obviously you've you've referred to it just Do you think there's been a bit of a sea change in terms of the environment obviously, given recent, you know, headlines and media stories over the past couple of years it it seems to have taken on even more importance than then say perhaps it did a few years ago.

Claudia Davidson 23:06

So we have our sustainability Theatre, which is Skanska sponsor, and it's a great part of the show a bit of old palettes. It's a real kind of centrepiece. But the sustainability content is coming up in all of the theatres. And even with the sounds as well. We have joined a initiative called Isla, which is around sustainability within the events industry. So we help our contractors and our suppliers build sustainable sustainable stands offset their emissions, obviously, for this year, we're actually tracking how everyone gets to the event, so that as an organisation, we can then offset the emissions afterwards. So yeah, it's not just obviously in the content, it's throughout the whole show.

Jim Wildman 23:38

Sure. It was learning lessons on here, I guess for the next year and and constantly adapted. Is that right?

Claudia Davidson 23:44

Yeah, we do. We really do. And I think we grow every year. And we and we learn and we adapt. I think last year was obviously the first year we were back from COVID. So it was put together. You had a couple of months, really, but this year, it's been nice to have that prior planning and be able to think everything through. But yeah, the planning is already well underway for for next year. So yeah, really excited.

Mark Round 24:02

Okay, Claudia, thanks for joining us on the podcast. Now I'm pleased to say we're joined by Nicola Bell, who is the Executive Director of major projects at national highways. Nicola, welcome along to the podcast. Hi, folks. Nice to see you. We were hearing from Nick earlier about the continued importance of England's major a road and motorway network in supporting economic growth. What are your thoughts on that? And why do you think it's so important for the for the nation's economy?

Nicola Bell 24:28

I mean, I don't think people really realise how much they interface with our roads on a daily basis every single day. Something that you've got in your house will have touched our roads, whether it's something you've ordered online, or whether you are heading to work or whether you're going off to see your loved ones. You know, I use it to go and see my family in Scotland but one of the reasons I got involved in roads is actually because my family got a little business in Scotland, and every single day they rely on two things. One, the courier van that comes at one o'clock And then the other part of the day at four o'clock when the Royal Mail van comes, and if they didn't have roads, then they wouldn't be able to get their goods to their customers. Yeah. And so I've kind of grown up with knowing that roads are really, really important when ultimately all of your business is done in another part of the country. So I think that that will continue. And we just play a real key part in making sure that people can travel a boat safely, they can trust us, and they can do their business, basically.

Jim Wildman 25:29

So Nicola, in terms of your role, obviously, there's a lot of planning, of course, in delivering roads, where would you see our role, or the role of national highways in working with government to streamline that process and delivering major pieces, most of major pieces of work,

Nicola Bell 25:43

I think it's vital that we continue actually the work that we've done with colleagues at, say, the Department for Transport to really make the process as easy as it can be, look, I think communities are at the heart of everything we do, they really aren't, they've got to have a voice. And we've learned loads about, you know, real deep, complex planning processes, normally through the development consent orders recently. But I think that the experience that we've got, will then feed in to making things easier, better for communities. So I think it's really about continuing that work, giving our experience seeing where we've had good points, bad points. But moreover, just let's let's make sure that it is it's taking the right time. So that actually the benefits that we can bring are brought a little bit quicker.

Mark Round 26:28

And also in terms of highways UK, obviously, with the show, following the pandemic, it's it's great to see people back in person and meet people in the supply chain face to face. Once again,

Nicola Bell 26:37

There is such a buzz out there today, I think somebody was telling me, it's the biggest that it's ever, ever been. But it does really feel like it's a big family coming coming together again, you see people who you haven't seen

for years, but also it's just about that sharing knowledge. In particular, for some of the things that you've talked about today. We've got colleagues here from the Department for Transport, we've got colleagues here from local authorities, all of your stakeholders, the sub national transport bodies, so I've been out speaking to all of them today, which is particularly been great to see them face to face.

Jim Wildman 27:08

Great. And Nicola, we've been asking colleagues today, come up with three words, really, that some of their view of national highways or their vision for national highways, can ask you to do the same place.

Nicola Bell 27:18

Of course, I mean, you could say safety, customer delivery, I think that's embedded in us all. But the three that I would go for is passion, is my first one. Everybody on national highways is pretty passionate about what they do never worked anywhere where people are not so passionate. Second word would actually be the people. Part of reason that you stay in a job is because of the people that you work with. And I can honestly say I haven't worked with a rare bunch of people. And the third word I would choose is future because no matter what, the road network is going to be some part of whatever the future world looks like. So people passion and future.

Mark Round 27:55

Nicola, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to talk to us on the podcast. Now if you've been walking around the stands at highways UK, you may have seen some people wearing very funky coloured jackets, bright pink and orange and greens. Now there's reason why those people are wearing those rather different looking high visibility jackets. It's part of a special campaign called make it visible, which has been run by lighthouse, the construction industry charity, and they're here at highways UK to talk about the importance of emotional, physical and financial wellbeing for those working in the supply chain. And here is Jim Waldman, speaking to Bill, who's telling us about what the charity aims to do.

Jim Wildman 28:36

Bill Hill from the lighthouse construction industry charity. Thanks for joining us, Bill. Just can you please just elaborate a little bit on what the charity does?

Bill Hill 28:44

Yeah, let me tell you a little bit about as we are a charity is 100%, dedicated to looking after the welfare and well being of construction workforce and their families in the UK and Ireland. That's what we do. That's where we wake up every day. And we've got a whole portfolio of services we've got for everybody to access, if they're in need,

Jim Wildman 29:03

Bill just tell us a little bit about the work you do with the construction industry and a little bit more about the offer from the charity.

Bill Hill 29:11

Well we're really delighted to be here at highways UK, it's a great opportunity for everybody here to know a little bit about what we do. We offer a fantastic range of services. We offer a 24/7 helpline to help people either emotionally physically or financially if they're in trouble. We offer a text hardhat service so people can get immediate access to somebody on text to talk about counselling if they're getting they're in trouble. We've got fantastic app, you can download a wellness app packed full of information about tips and help about how to overcome stress, anxiety, depression, anger, how to manage alcohol, all those tips are in that app. It's called the construction industry helpline up it's downloadable, it's free. We also got a whole series of masterclasses again to help people who want to be more proactive. But learning about stress management, work life balance, that sort of tasting, we've even got mindfulness, which again, is really great for just getting your head to calm down. But the thing we're really proud of as well, we've got a nationwide network of around about 300, Lighthouse beacons, these are drop in centres that are available to anybody who's working away from home to drop in, you can socialise and learn a little bit about things that are going on or even get signposts to get any help. I mean, our mission is a no construction worker, or their family should be alone in a crisis. And that's what we're here to do.

Jim Wildman 30:32

Obviously, well being is you know, something we talk about more now, how much awareness is out there? Do you think in the industry?

Bill Hill 30:40

it's coming along very well. I mean, a lot of companies now are engaging in some sort of well being programme now. And our job as a charity is to bring it all together. Every company big companies know subcontract so much as well supply chain is quite long, so the subcontract subcontract subcontract. So some of the tier ones have got fantastic wellbeing programmes, but it doesn't always flow down through the supply chain, to the boots on the ground. And our programme is all about helping the boots on the ground is helping the smaller companies that are working for the bigger companies who've got nothing, they've got nowhere to fall back on. So we're working with the larger companies to get that message through the supply chain, and get out to the people who really need it most.

Jim Wildman 31:19

And it's that message getting out there. Do you think do you think, you know, what can people do to sort of spread the message or find out more do you think?

Bill Hill 31:25

Just do what you're doing now, which is put the owner podcast, get it out to the people who listen to podcasts, get in touch with us, we've got lots of materials here that you can use to get the information through your supply chain, just simply get in touch with lighthouseclub.org. And we'll give you lots of materials to get that message out there. And you might even think about helping us with a bit of fundraising at some point as well so we can pay for it.

Jim Wildman 31:47

Thank you very much. Absolute pleasure.

Mark Round 31:49

So that's it for another year here at highways UK.

Jim Wildman 31:53

If you enjoyed the podcast please make sure to subscribe and share it and until next time, from all of us here at the NEC goodbye