

THE CONSIDERATE CONSTRUCTORS SCHEME: IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF CONSTRUCTION, BUT HOW CONSIDERATE ARE THEY TO CONTRACTORS?

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The United Kingdom (UK) construction industry is fragmented in nature, and frequently attracts hostility among local communities. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within construction management is relatively new, and the industry is actively engaged in CSR practices. One such approach, and the focus of this paper, is the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS). The CCS is an organisation that seeks to improve the image of the construction industry and encourages active engagement with stakeholders. Therefore, this paper aims to identify and document the advantages and disadvantages of registering construction sites with the CCS from a contractor's perspective. This study is part of a broader PhD investigation, concentrating on stakeholder management and engagement. The research method undertaken is qualitatively based, encompassing four case study individual interviews and two focus group seminars, with construction professionals on projects located throughout the UK. The data is qualitatively assessed using mind mapping software and cognitively summarised. Advantages of registering with the Scheme include that CCS principles are applied on all projects anyway, CCS has improved the image of construction sites, CCS is good for the image of the construction industry overall, CCS sets new standards, CCS is good for CSR and, CCS improves relationships with external stakeholders. Disadvantages of registering with the Scheme include having to pay to be a member, the site inspections are varied, the scoring is inconsistent, the CCS is very subjective, you have to pay a lot of money to improve the image of the site, the assessors do not understand the preparation work involved, and there is too much emphasis on irrelevant activities, to gain a high score. The key contribution of this research illustrates many positive and negative attributes, identifying six advantages and seven disadvantages from a contractor's perspective, of registering construction sites with the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Keywords: Considerate Constructors Scheme, construction image, CSR, stakeholder

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom (UK) construction industry frequently attracts hostility among the local community and public, due to its disruptive influence arising from

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construction and demolition activities (Othman 2009; Barthorpe 2010). These activities impact areas surrounding construction sites and affect a wide range of stakeholders (Glass and Simmonds 2007). Considering the fragmented nature of urban construction projects, Curran *et al.*, (2018) suggest that integration and communication is required amongst all stakeholders. As a result, Lin *et al.*, (2018) acknowledge that implementing social responsibility at construction project level is crucial for achieving sustainable development within the construction industry. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within construction management is relatively new (Larsen *et al.*, 2012), and it is aimed at improving construction processes in its broadest terms. Other scholars (Watts and Holme 2003; Loosemore and Lim 2017a) generally describe CSR as the continuing commitment by business, to behave ethically and contribute to economic development, while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families, as well as of the local community and society at large. Loosemore and Lim (2017b) argue that the construction industry is adopting an integrative approach to CSR, recognising the mutuality of interests between business and society. Furthermore, Barthorpe (2010) and Larsen *et al.*, (2012) corroborate that the construction industry in the UK is actively engaged in CSR practices. One such practice is the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS), which is an organisation that seeks to improve the image of the construction industry and encourages active engagement with stakeholders and the local community (CCS 2018a). Construction sites and companies voluntarily register with the Scheme and agree to abide by a Code of Considerate Practice.

When reviewing the literature, previous research fails to acknowledge and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of registering with the CCS from a UK contractor's perspective, while most industry reports and surveys appear vague in comparison. Therefore, in the context of urban construction sites, it is necessary to identify an understanding of contractor's attitudes towards the CCS, both positive and negative, and what advantages and disadvantages there are, if any, from registering a construction site with the Scheme. To address these issues and fulfil a gap in knowledge, it is essential to consider and generate results based on actual events that emerge, when studying an inherently complex environment, such as the UK construction industry. Concentrating on a pertinent angle of interest, these aims are achieved by implementing a sequential mixed method approach, assimilating a combination of qualitative techniques for analysis, including a literature review and semi-structured individual interviews and focus group seminars, while using mind mapping software, which can be cognitively summarised. In addressing this aim, it is anticipated that this study will assist and aid contracting companies in identifying advantages and disadvantages of registering their construction sites with the CCS.

THE CONSIDERATE CONSTRUCTORS SCHEME

In the UK, following recommendations emanating from the seminal Latham Report (1994), the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) was founded (Barthorpe *et al.*, 2004). The report concluded that the construction industry should implement and extend the Corporation of London's 'Considerate Contractors Scheme', launched in 1987 (Ogunlana 2003), and the City of Westminster's 'Considerate Building Scheme', launched in 1989 (Murray *et al.*, 2011), across the rest of the UK, with immediate effect. Following this report, the Construction Industry Council (CIC) were tasked with building on the success of these models and improving the image of the industry, and, as a result of its work, the CCS was formed (Designing Buildings 2018). Oyedele (2012) argues that the Scheme is concerned with any area of construction

activity that may have a direct or indirect impact on the image of the industry. Mackenzie *et al.*, (2000) agree that its aim is to outlaw unsafe and untidy construction sites and improve the standard of site management and the behaviour of site operatives.

The Scheme operates a voluntary Code of Considerate Practice (Lou *et al.*, 2012; 2015), committing those in the Scheme to "care about appearance, respect the community, protect the environment, secure everyone's safety and value their workforce" (CCS 2018a). Murray *et al.*, (2011) support that one of the key requirements of the CCS, is to establish contact with neighbours who are affected by the project and maintaining communication from pre-start to completion. Since its inception in 1997, over 100,000 sites all over the UK have registered with the Scheme (CCS 2018b), and in 2017, it registered its first site in Ireland (Construction News 2017). Barthorpe (2003) highlights that the CCS is an ideal framework for the construction industry to implement a societal stakeholder approach; however, Glass and Simmonds (2007) argue that to improve the sometimes-difficult relationship between construction and its stakeholders, more research on effective practices is required. Nevertheless, the CIOB (2010) affirm that initiatives such as the CCS encourage various campaigns and techniques, to enhance project communications to a wider range of stakeholders. Barthorpe (2010) further supports that the introduction of the CCS has provided a useful framework and impetus for construction companies and their clients, to carefully consider their community stakeholders and raise their social and environmental awareness performance. Thus, by registering a site with the CCS, a construction company is openly demonstrating their commitment to CSR, and promotion of good practice (CCS 2003).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is part of a broader investigation within a PhD, concentrating on stakeholder management and engagement within UK and Irish urban construction projects. Considering the theoretical position and epistemological reasoning this paper and subsequent research is founded on, a critical realism approach is used. A subjectivist approach is applied to the ontology, as the nature of this study primarily deals with the opinions of human participants, which also provides a basis for the case study methodology. On completion of an informative literature review, the research method consists of case study analysis, including four exploratory individual interviews and two focus group seminars, with a variety of construction professionals based on large urban development projects situated throughout the UK. The selection of the six case studies was based on a combination of criterion and convenience sampling strategies; firstly, by identifying construction sites that were registered with the CCS, and secondly, by arranging interviews and focus groups depending on the participants availability at the time of each visit. The unit of study incorporates both individuals and groups, as De Vaus (2002) states that the research problem can be approached from a variety of angles. Similarly, the case study approach is chosen as it is the most suitable for the 'how' and 'why' research questions (Yin 2014), which Rowley (2004) believes is beneficial as it facilitates the investigation of a phenomenon in its real-life context. Also, a semi-structured interview format is chosen, as this uses an open and closed ended form of questioning, where questions are asked in no specific order or schedule (Naoum 2007). This method allows questions to lead from one to another, enabling the interviewee to provide as much information as possible. Considering the focus group seminars, Guest *et al.*, (2017)

surmise that this method allows for the production of information that might not be gathered from a single respondent.

Considering ethical issues, each participant was informed of the nature of the research, its purpose, and what the resultant data will be used for. The identities of those involved remain anonymous, and confidential information such as company names, addresses, client details, etc. are not disclosed. Case A consists of a new £500 million mixed use development in London, and the interviewee is a Community Liaison Manager with ten years' industry experience, working for the main contractor, which is a very large international firm. Case B is another mixed used development in London, valued at £34 million, and the interviewee is a Site Manager with seven years' experience, working for the main contractor, which is based in Ireland. Case C is a new £850 million sports stadium development in London, and the interviewee is a Community Engagement Manager with fourteen years' experience, working for the main contractor, which is a very large international firm. Case D is a new £30 million student accommodation complex in London, and the interviewee is a Project Manager with ten years' experience, working for the main contractor, which is based in Northern Ireland. Case E is a new £9.2 million hotel development in London, and the interviewees are a Project Manager with eighteen years' experience, and a Health and Safety Manager with over thirty years' experience, working for the main contractor which is based in Ireland. Finally, Case F is a £16 million secondary school development in Northern Ireland, and the interviewees include a Community Liaison Manager, Facilities Manager, Health and Safety Officer, Quantity Surveyor and Contracts Manager with an average of thirty years' industry experience, working for the main contractor which is a medium sized contracting company based in Northern Ireland. The six case studies are a combination of both live and recently completed urban development projects. All four interviews and two focus groups were recorded in handwritten note format, and interaction with the participants on Cases A, B, C and E took place in the site offices of each project, whereas Cases D and F took place in the company's head offices.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The interviews and focus groups commenced by gaining general background information about each participant and their relevant case study. This was followed by a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the CCS from their own perspective. The data gathered from the case study interviews and focus groups is then qualitatively assessed and cognitively summarised using mind mapping software. Banxia Decision Explorer® is used for this purpose, which builds a visual representation of ideas and can provide a focus for debate, reflection and progression. Marin and Wellman (2011) note that this form of analysis is also known as social network analysis, as it involves the use of a network diagram which connects socially-relevant nodes by one or more relations. Decision Explorer® can undertake many forms of analysis, but for the purposes of this study, Central and Domain Analysis is used. The analysis logically expresses how each factor or 'concept' is linked and interpreted, and each concept was discussed in some form by the interviewees. Central Analysis presents the key concepts from the interviews which have the greatest effect or impact on the mapped model (Brightman 2002), and the higher the score, the higher the effect that concept has on the map. Domain Analysis shows concepts which have many links, giving a representation and an understanding of relationships that exist in the mapped model (Montazemi and Conrath 1986). Due to space limitations, only the top five concepts in the Central and Domain Analysis,

including advantages and disadvantages of both are included. Combining the data from all four interviews and two focus groups, the key concepts are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. It is worth noting that the findings are case study specific, thus, not a generalised view. However, this study provides a foundation to advance and explore the topic further, supporting continuous research into the Considerate Constructors Scheme and its role in the UK construction industry.

Table 1: Central Analysis

Rank	Score	Concept (Positives / Advantages)
1	27 from 50 concepts	Many CCS principles already applied on projects anyway
2	26 from 50 concepts	The CCS is good for the image of the construction industry overall
3	26 from 49 concepts	The CCS has improved the image of construction sites
4	22 from 45 concepts	The CCS is good for CSR
5	20 from 46 concepts	The CCS improves relationships with external stakeholders
Rank	Score	Concept (Negatives / Disadvantages)
1	24 from 49 concepts	You have to pay to be a member (of the CCS)
2	23 from 46 concepts	The site inspections are varied
3	22 from 46 concepts	You have to pay a lot of money to improve the image of your site
4	21 from 45 concepts	The scoring is inconsistent
5	21 from 42 concepts	The CCS is very subjective

Table 2: Domain Analysis

Rank	Number of Links	Concept (Positives / Advantages)
1	5	Many CCS principles already applied on projects anyway
2	4	The CCS has improved the image of construction sites
3	4	The CCS is good for the image of the construction industry overall
4	3	The CCS sets new standards
5	3	The CCS is good for CSR
Rank	Number of Links	Concept (Negatives / Disadvantages)
1	5	Too much emphasis on irrelevant activities to gain a high score
2	3	You have to pay to be a member (of the CCS)
3	3	The assessors do not understand the preparation work involved
4	3	You have to pay a lot of money to improve the image of your site
5	2	The CCS is very subjective

DISCUSSION

Positives and Advantages

Combining the four case study interviews and two focus groups, the data explores the experiences of construction contractors who register their sites with the CCS. The top concept from both the Central and Domain Analysis is 'many CCS principles already applied on projects anyway'. This was frequently discussed in four of the case studies and corroborates with an annual survey carried out by the CCS in 2012, where they found that 53% of contractors surveyed said they already implement similar practices (CCS 2012). The Community Liaison Manager in Case F remarked that the company would always try to implement considerate practice on all projects, even if they were not contractually obliged to. Rok *et al.*, (2017) support that CSR is used to describe everything that a company does, aside from what it has always done, to satisfy stakeholders further. The Contracts Manager in Case F recognised the principles

behind the CCS but stressed that it is a matter of applying some common sense. This substantiates with Ogunlana (2003), who suggests that being socially responsible, by applying considerate contracting techniques, was not altruism, but sound business sense. Also, the Project Manager in Case D echoed that on his site, the construction team assisted the local church in building a wall and tidying up the area, as a gesture of goodwill. They also held a coffee morning on site, to raise money for a local charity, as he believed that small acts like that make a positive impact on the local area. Sözen and Kayahan (2001) argue that goodwill is the most effective and least costly means of safeguarding exchange and enhancing performance. Lau and Rowlinson (2009) also agree, stating that using goodwill gestures demonstrates a willingness to invest in high levels of trust, credibility and reputation.

The findings in both the Central and Domain Analysis are closely linked, with the next concepts identified as 'the CCS is good for the image of the construction industry overall', 'the CCS has improved the image of construction sites', 'the CCS is good for CSR', 'the CCS improves relationships with external stakeholders', and 'the CCS sets new standards'. All interviewees did agree that the CCS was good for the industry, and its image has improved since its inception. Geach (2016) argues that the CCS has encouraged a paradigm shift, in which construction companies aim to increasingly care about the environmental performance of the buildings they build and leave positive legacies in the communities they work in. Also, Murray and Dainty (2013) suggest that the desire of the construction firm to project a positive and responsible image to its customers is rooted in its business practices. Furthermore, the CCS Annual Survey 2012 supports that for clients and contractors, the biggest benefit of the CCS is that it creates better relations between the construction industry and the public (CCS 2012). Regarding CSR, the Project Manager in Case F believed that the CCS is something that keeps a construction company focussed in being socially responsible, and it is their duty to consider all stakeholders on the project, both internal and external. Barthorpe (2010) argues that CSR can be considered as an umbrella term, incorporating the tenets of environmental sustainability, business ethics, public relations and stakeholder analysis. Ghobadian *et al.*, (2015) agree that CSR has become a widely used term for a variety of stakeholders, with a desire to rethink traditional ways of doing business. The Site Manager in Case B felt that being registered with the CCS did benefit their relationship with external stakeholders in the local community, as Li *et al.*, (2013) note that failure to accommodate external stakeholder concerns in large construction projects can lead to severe resistance.

Negatives and Disadvantages

Two of the main concepts in both the Central and Domain Analysis are related to costs; 'you have to pay to be a member (of the CCS)', and 'you have to pay a lot of money to improve the image of your site'. This was discussed frequently in four of the case studies and supports the findings of the CCS 2012 Annual Survey, which showed that the cost of registration was the least satisfactory part of the Scheme (CCS 2012). Caven *et al.*, (2016) argue that one of the weaknesses of the Scheme is that it is funded by its member organisations to outsource their own responsibility for monitoring behaviours. The Community Engagement Manager in Case C empathised the difficulties a smaller contracting firm face when trying to fulfil a number of CCS requirements. In the large company she works for, there are more finances and resources to employ a Sustainability Manager and Community Engagement Manager, to complete the various CCS related tasks. The focus group participants in Case F asserted this view, arguing that the fee to register with the CCS is quite expensive, and

extra costs are incurred for posters and other branded materials. One of the participants exclaimed further that the CCS is 'a money-making racket!'

The first and third concepts in the Domain Analysis is 'too much emphasis on irrelevant activities to gain a high score', and 'the assessors do not understand the preparation work involved'. The Site Manager in Case B was sceptical of the CCS, stating that it can be onerous and tedious to hit the targets that they set, and that the people setting these standards, have very little experience of actually being on site. The Community Liaison Manager in Case A agreed that she did not think the CCS assessors understood the amount of work involved in preparing for a site visit, in the hope of gaining a high score. Murray *et al.*, (2011) validate that the Scheme is always looking for the contractor to be inventive and imaginative, as well as being a proactive, accountable good neighbour and employer. Abuzeinab and Arif (2014) support that the desire to get a good CCS score has encouraged site managers to engage in finding innovative ways to improve the main categories covered by the Scheme. One example of this is planting flowers. The Project Manager in Case D spoke about how his company planted flowerbeds for a local community group adjacent to the site, and the Health and Safety Manager in Case E spoke about using old hard hats as a substitute for flower baskets, which were placed at the site entrance. The Contracts Manager in Case F argued that flowers may look pleasant but questioned what they have got to do with the actual construction project itself. Nevertheless, Woodhead (2015) stress that it is the little things that count and planting a small flowerbed at a site entrance can be the difference between a good score and an excellent score.

The remaining concepts in the Central and Domain Analysis are associated with the inconsistency of the scoring and site inspections; 'the site inspections are varied', 'the scoring is inconsistent', and 'the CCS is very subjective'. This was a recurring theme across five of the case studies, and a significant issue amongst the participants. The Project Manager in Case D argued that the scoring system is very subjective, citing that another construction site in another part of the country, where the company is the main contractor, will gain a higher score for the same or maybe less preparation work carried out on his site. The Health and Safety Officer in Case F had similar experiences. As he was the main person within the company overseeing CCS across all company projects, he ensured that all sites had the same standards in place, but commonly found that a CCS monitor would give varying scores for the same requirements. The consistency in monitor's scoring was one of the least satisfactory elements of the Scheme according to a CCS Survey in 2012, where smaller firms felt they were being judged according to the same criteria as larger and wealthier sites, putting them at a disadvantage (CCS 2012).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focuses on identifying advantages and disadvantages of registering construction sites with the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) from a UK contractor's perspective. The UK construction industry is fragmented in nature and frequently attracts hostility among the local community and public. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aims at improving construction processes in its broadest terms, and the UK industry is actively engaged in CSR practices, with one such practice being the CCS. Considering the results captured from the case studies and data analysis, including four individual interviews and two focus group seminars, six advantages and seven disadvantages are identified. Advantages of registering with

the Scheme include; that 'CCS principles are applied on all projects anyway', 'CCS has improved the image of construction sites', 'CCS is good for the image of the construction industry overall', 'CCS sets a standard', 'CCS is good for CSR' and 'CCS improves relationships with external stakeholders'. Disadvantages of registering with the Scheme include; 'having to pay to be a member', 'the site inspections are varied', 'the scoring is inconsistent', 'the CCS is very subjective', 'you have to pay a lot of money to improve the image of the site', 'the assessors do not understand the preparation work involved', and 'there is too much emphasis on irrelevant activities to gain a high score'.

However, the findings from the interviews and focus groups are case study specific, and only a concise, subjective view of the topic is produced, not a generalised one. Nevertheless, this study provides a foundation to advance and expand into more detailed research and supports continuous investigation into the role of the CCS. The findings in this paper can be developed further, and it is anticipated that a wider analytical context can be addressed in an ensuing journal publication, where additional theoretical points of departure can be articulated. It is recommended that further case studies in the form of both individual interviews and focus group seminars are considered for qualitative analysis, and a sequential selection strategy is incorporated using quota and random sampling methods. Therefore, this provides the basis for informing and verifying the validity and necessity of the research and subsequent investigation going forward. Furthermore, additional case studies that are qualitatively considered can be developed quantitatively using questionnaire surveys, introducing another aspect to the area of research. To summarise, this study illustrates to construction contracting firms that there are both positive and negative attributes with registering construction sites with the Considerate Constructors Scheme, including six advantages and seven disadvantages identified in this research.

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