

Climate Change experts receive ICE Prize

A report written by Atkins experts calling for review of London's existing transport infrastructure to plan for climate change, has been awarded the prestigious ICE James Hill Prize.

Brian Arkell & Geoff Darch (Water Management) were awarded the prize for their paper "The impact of climate change on London's transport networks" which was also presented as part of the ICE Prestige Lecture series in 2007.

The paper looked at how we may need to adapt our transport systems to cope with the effects of a changing climate in London, which by 2050 is expected to experience a 3.5°C rise in summer temperature and 20 percent increase in winter rainfall. As the severe disruption caused by soaring temperatures on the London Underground in recent summers has highlighted, we need to plan now for the extreme weather conditions that are likely to occur during the coming decades.

The case studies examined included tidal and river flooding and its effects on proposed new transport infrastructure for the Thames Gateway; local flooding of the transport infrastructure; damage to the national rail and road infrastructure from hot weather and passenger discomfort on the London Underground.

Recommendations on a number of key actions were made to ensure that London is better prepared for the risks arising from climate change and recommends that new infrastructure, rolling stock and vehicles be designed for the conditions they will experience in their lifetime. Furthermore, it calls for a review of existing infrastructure to determine how it will adapt to the risks faced from climate change.

As Brian Arkell stated at the time of the report's release in September 2005, "We tend to think of climate change as something we'll need to deal with at some stage in the future. Our work has shown that most of the risks are already apparent and what we need to address now is the changing level of risk that any change in climate may bring and how we can adapt to minimise the impacts. Adapting to climate change needn't be difficult or costly, as long as we start to build it into our planning and management now."

The success of the award and similar projects have been built on bringing together multi-disciplinary skills across Atkins to assist clients in addressing climate change issues. This includes a recent initiative to create a Climate Change and Transport Working Group that brings together professionals from D&ES, Rail and H&T.

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