



EDA Presentation

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Mark Anthony and I am here today to speak to you about the High Reach Guidance Notes that I helped to produce just over two years ago.

But before I do so, let me tell you a little more about myself.

I am a journalist by trade and I have been writing about construction and demolition equipment for more than 20 years.

I started my construction-related career on the UK magazines Contract Journal and Plant Managers Journal and also spent some time on International Construction which I am sure you all receive.

More recently, I became press officer for the National Federation of Demolition Contractors;

Editor of Demolition & Dismantling, the magazine of the NFDC;

And founder of www.demolitionnews.com. But more of that later.

As I said, my primary reason for being here today is to offer my thoughts on the proposed high reach guidance that the EDA is working upon.

But let me make one thing very clear. I am not here today as a spokesperson for the NFDC, and the thoughts that I am about to share with you are mine and mine alone.

As most of you will be aware, the National Federation of Demolition Contractors in the UK published its own set of guidance notes back in 2006 and I was part of the three-man team that put together that document.

However, what you may not know is that work on that document started back in 2003 when a 30 metre reach machine was considered huge. In fact, the NFDC chief executive Howard Button discussed the concept of this guidance with the EDA at a seminar in Cyprus probably four years ago.

Together with Howard and myself, industry veteran Paul Brown was one of the driving forces behind the development of the NFDC's guidance.

During 2003 and 2004, Paul visited and spoke to high reach excavator users across the length and breadth of the UK. He had extensive and highly detailed meetings with manufacturers including Caterpillar and JCB and with third party modifiers like Kocurek.

Drawing upon the hands-on experience of these users, and the technical knowledge of these market-leading manufacturers, Paul set about creating the first draft of the document that was to become the NFDC's guidance notes. And he wasn't finished there.

That draft document was then read, amended and in part rewritten following further meetings and discussions with users and suppliers. In fact, by the time I got my hands on that document, it had been almost two years in the making and had been rewritten at least three times.

In fairness to Paul, the document I eventually received was excellent. It had been thoroughly researched, checked and vetted and all that was left for me to do was a final editing. That editing alone took three months!

But it was worth it.

The resulting document was incredibly well received. In addition to its universal adoption across the UK, the document was translated into both French and German and we even sent several thousand copies to our colleagues in the National Demolition Association in the US.

In short, it is a document of which we were (and still are) incredibly proud.

Which is just one reason why I believe that the European Demolition Association is misguided in its attempt to produce its own set of guidance notes.

It is my contention that the EDA is being left behind by developments in the high reach excavator market

- That it is in danger of alienating UK contractors by producing a “watered down” guidance
- That it has missed an opportunity for a “quick win”
- And that it could be spending its time and resources better elsewhere.

Allow me to clarify those statements.

It took three years for the NFDC to produce its original set of guidance notes. During that time, the maximum reach of those high reach machines grew from around 30 to more than 55 metres. To the best of my knowledge, the EDA has been discussing this document for more than a year and there is already a 90 metre machine in place. And it surely won't be long before a 100 metre machine arrives.

Furthermore, the NFDC guidance was produced following an incredible amount of discussion and research. Manufacturers were consulted, sites were visited and experts were consulted. And while the UK's Health and Safety Executive will never endorse such a document, they did give it their full and unequivocal backing and support. In short, the UK had set a benchmark for the rest of Europe (and even the world) to follow.

The EDA, however, has reached the current position with its own guidance following a series of round table discussions.

As an organisation that is designed to encourage best practice, surely the sensible approach would have been to simply adopt the highest available standard; the standard set in the UK?

I would reiterate that I am not here as a spokesman for the NFDC. But it is safe to say that UK contractors will simply NOT adopt a European guidance that in any way detracts from the NFDC document or that is seen to be inferior in any way.

Perhaps most frustrating of all is the fact that the EDA has missed an opportunity for a quick win.

If the EDA had simply adopted the NFDC guidance when it was first published,

- European demolition companies would now have access to a well-researched guidance;

- The EDA would have had some excellent PR
- And the EDA could have been focussing on more pressing matters.

Just as an aside, let me remind you that, to the best of the NFDC's knowledge, there has never been a fatality that could be attributed directly to the misuse of a high reach excavator. And yet mobile crushers - common on demolition sites across Europe - regularly maim, injure and kill demolition workers. Surely that would have been a better use of EDA resources.

But more of that tomorrow.

Now I am sure there are many of you out there thinking "well, he would say all of that; he wrote the NFDC guidance and he's just protecting his own work."

I am sure that there are also a few thinking "typical Englishman; always think they know best".

Maybe there is a degree of truth in both of those statements and yes, I am very protective of the work that myself and the NFDC did on our guidance notes. But I am also a realist.

I realise, for example, that we will soon have to revisit the guidance to take into account the incredible growth in the size and reach of these machines.

I also realise that we may need to modify our guidance to allow for changes in UK and European legislation.

And I know that we may eventually be required to produce an additional version of the guidance notes specifically for the machine operators.

But I also know that the NFDC has produced a set of guidance notes that is well-researched, thorough and usable and that any attempt to replace it will have to be exceptionally good if UK contractors are to take it seriously.

Now I have one final point to make which I would like the EDA to consider.

At the NFDC's Convention in Majorca in August, I launched two new sets of guidance notes:

one on the safe use of mobile crushers in a demolition environment which I will be speaking about tomorrow;

and another, more comprehensive publication on floor-by-floor or top down deconstruction.

The top-down guidance is currently being reprinted as our initial stock was snapped up by NFDC members. But the author of that guidance, John Woodward, is here today. I would strongly urge the EDA to look very closely at this document, to discuss it with John and with William Sinclair, and to seriously consider adopting it as its own Europe-wide standard.

Thank you.