

THIS ISSUE - INNOVATION & REPAIRS



Welcome to the second edition of the Subsidence Forum's Innovation newsletter!

The first newsletter focussed on the latest developments in remote monitoring and tree mitigation; development of the Tree Root Protocol; and impact of health and safety legislation

on underpinning. All of these areas remain topical with this year seeing the launch of updated CDM regulations and trees coming under the spotlight of the Greater London Assembly investigation (see 'Chainsaw Massacre' news item in this newsletter).

This edition is being published to coincide with Post magazine's Subsidence Expo – and provides a particular focus on the repair end of the process.

As an insured peril, subsidence is unique. Whereas fire, flood, escape of water etc usually require a reactive response from an insurer and repairer, the subsidence repair usually follows a number of months of site investigation and monitoring. Project management skills have to be employed carefully to handle large volumes of claims and specialist repairers are needed to handle the technical aspects of the subsidence repair process.

The articles from Forum members in this edition are wide ranging – from insurers, project managers and specialist repairers.

If there is a theme, it seems to be that to innovate the industry needs enlightened insurers to invest time and effort in new processes and to be prepared to take a bit of a risk now and again. Where relationships are formed, they need to be on a firm foundation of trust and understanding with the flexibility to encourage and implement good ideas.

Remember too that it is people who sow the seeds of innovation – not just the big companies - and front line engineers and small organisations need to be encouraged and engaged to enable innovations to prosper.

We are all striving for the same old thing - how do we handle subsidence claims so that we have genuinely happy customers – at costs that are continually managed down whilst working safely, compliantly and efficiently?

The Subsidence Forum is a great opportunity for people to engage face to face through organised

events and build professional and personal relationships that will hopefully encourage organisations to try new methods and processes. Enjoy reading this edition of the Innovation Group Newsletter and remember it is your Forum so feel free to contact any of the members through the website contacts.

Nick Deakin - Chair Innovation Group
Nick.deakin@uk.royalsun.com

Breaking the Rules

I was at a seminar recently where we had a very lively workshop.

We were split into teams, subdivided into two groups. Each group had to design either a bridge or a car (to go over the bridge) using parts from a standard kit of components. We then swapped places and had to bring the other group's plans to life. To add a touch of reality the brief was changed part-way through the exercise! The object of the exercise was to get delegates thinking about how well they; communicate, work as a team, innovate and adapt to changing situations.

It would have been a lot easier if we could have involved the group who had to build our design from the start some even tried to bend the rules by constructing a mock-up and sending pictures via their mobile phones!

The way the workshop rules operated, deliberately making team communication challenging, was a good illustration how we used to do things on subsidence claims - only after the repairs were fully specified would we seek involvement of a repair contractor. Then, just like in the workshop, the specification often had to be amended part-way through the repairs.

My point is that in real life we don't need to impose such restrictions. Introducing early communication and

continues on page 2



The past 12 months has increasingly seen greater emphasis on new pricing and scoping technology, with some systems originating from overseas. Not that this idea is new to the UK. Scoping and pricing tools have been around, in one form or another, for about 10 years, so what's new?

Scoping systems have changed, from being adolescent excel-based 'good ideas' to more mature web-based 'essential tools'. In a development path mirroring that of the mobile phone, they've moved from being 'bricks' into increasingly becoming sleek communication devices.

But to think of pricing and scoping systems as merely a 'tool of the trade' seems to be missing some of the most important elements. In a claims world influenced by regulation, compliance and now, the need to demonstrably 'treat the customer fairly', these new tools provide consistency, and more importantly transparency. The future is in 'real time control', not retrospective and costly audit, delivered through automated solutions.

Sitting behind these new tools are advanced component-based calculation engines which identify the repair cost at any particular time, in any particular location, and even allow for surges in price due to material shortages. Calculated repair costs comprise a combination of labour, plant and materials, linked together through productivity matrices, and then overlaid by flexible allowances for overheads, profit, and optional VAT.

In effect these systems give flexibility coupled with cost control, opening the door to claims settlements which can be 'cashing out', use of the insured's own repairers, the insurer's only network repair contractor

or a combination of any of these.

The benefit of web-based applications also avoids the need for expensive systems integration – the world of 'plug and play', accessible to all, has arrived as far as repair costing systems are concerned. Development costs will deter all but the most committed players. The level of sophistication has already exceeded the DIY technology solution.

At the heart of these new systems is the ability to analyse cost and trend, by location, type of property, adjuster, and engineer – in fact in any way a company might want to gain a better insight into business. As decisioning and routing tools increasingly feature on the horizon, these intelligent systems provide essential cost information which will couple with other data sources to give better claims practices and higher quality underwriting.

There are those who are bound to be sceptical. After all, with these systems having been around for a decade, why should they suddenly start to change the landscape? The answer possibly rests with the technological advances being made, so that benefit is beginning to outweigh cost to such a level as to create compelling arguments for change.

Development in any sector is inevitably a slow process, but the pressures on the insurance industry as a result of the UK construction boom, 2012 and the like will force insurers to think twice about their current strategies, and increasingly look to technology as one of the key enablers of change. Going forward, scoping and pricing tools are bound to be an increasingly key part of the future.

Tony Boobier
tboobier@mda.co.uk

Breaking the Rules continued from page 1

transparency is not breaking the rules, it's being smart!

In this piece I've been asked to give a brief take on large scale project management of subsidence repairs and I believe this early communication and transparency is at the heart of getting things right, particularly if combined with a focus on what the policyholder wants - timely completion of a well executed repair. It means involving the repairer early and working openly together to get the best results. Easier said than done? Well it's hard work to set up, change is rarely easy, but overall it's a lot simpler and less costly than the old ways.

Consider the following:

Project management techniques – two heads are better than one. Work with repairers and fully integrate your process to maximise efficiency, minimise waste and reduce timescales.

Innovation – this is all about coming up with new, practical ideas and then harnessing them effectively. Empower repairers in a spirit of partnership and real, practical innovation will follow, encompassing both process and repair techniques.

Claim spend – Tendering and uncertainty of workload adds significantly to overheads, hence job costs and claim spend. Working together under volume arrangements and to pre-agreed rates enables prices to be reduced but profit maintained. There are further savings to be made through ongoing process improvement and innovative repair solutions.

Surge – you can't remove the uncertainty over whether one will occur but you can do a lot when one arrives. If repairers know what is coming through to them early on, they still have time to plan, gear up and agree realistic start dates with you. It pays to think 'repair' right from day one and liaise on capacity.

Customer – if it was your claim wouldn't you like early involvement of the firm who will be repairing your home?

The secret is enabling the subsidence expert and repairer to work together, both at portfolio and individual claim level, to deliver true, practical innovation. It is no coincidence that the workshop referred to above was attended by repair contractors as part of a day dedicated to teamwork and sharing ideas.

Nigel Barham, Cunningham Lindsey UK
nigel.barham@cl-uk.com

ROUGH GUIDE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

As global warming moves to the top of the political agenda, governments will be forced to respond with more legislation and statutory controls around environmental issues. Building operations are already affected by the Landfill Directive and Aggregate Levy and DEFRA is consulting on Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) to be compulsory on contracts over £250,000 in 2008.

How long will it be before subsidence contractors have to operate with SWMPs in place for all works? Colour coded skips for waste now seen on large sites may become the norm.

To prepare everyone for the increasing demands of environmental legislation here is a rough guide to various organisations who could help you to start planning for the changes now.

BITC – Business In the Community - membership comprises around 750 members including over 70 of the FTSE 100 companies with a further 2,000 engaged through a network of 90 plus global partners. These companies measure and report on progress and illustrate the action being taken to improve the impact of their operations, products and services on society and the environment. **Find out more at www.bitc.org.uk**

WRAP– Waste and Resources Action Programme - works in partnership to encourage and enable businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials and recycle more things more often. The construction section includes a focus on the use of recycled materials in projects, particularly aggregates and plasterboard, and also segregation of waste. The website also provides practical advice for all members of the construction chain from supplier managers to repairers.

Web site is www.wrap.org.uk

Envirowise - offers UK businesses free, independent, confidential advice and support on practical ways to increase profits, minimise waste and reduce environmental impact. Envirowise publishes guidance notes for trades and organises events and workshops across the country including toolbox talks for workforces.

Web site is www.envirowise.gov.uk

BRE – Building Research Establishment BRE's Innovative Housing team is looking at greater use of offsite manufacturing and other Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). BRE and a consortium of construction product manufacturers are participating in a new DTI and industry-funded project called BeAware - Built Environment Action on Waste Awareness and Resource Efficiency. In addition BRE is supporting a project looking at the sustainable refurbishment of a Victorian stable-block on their site.

Find out more at www.bre.co.uk

SMALLER SUPPLIER, BETTER VALUE?

Innovation is not just about new products and services, it is equally about thinking of things in a different way. With increasing pressure on insurers, and especially supplier managers, to obtain greater efficiencies and leverage savings, the subsidence market has increasingly gone down the route of 'big is best', with the awarding of longer and more valuable contracts. In fact this model is very similar to that historically followed by other industries and sectors, but questions are now being asked whether 'big' is in fact 'best', and whether there are other ways of looking at the problem.

As a subsidence industry we should not be scathing about ideas which originate from outside the insurance community. The subsidence industry as it exists today is closely modelled on Sir John Egan's report 'Rethinking Construction' which identified inefficiencies in the building industry and addressed them through partnership, standardisation, and cross-industry sharing of knowledge – the very foundations on which the Subsidence Forum has been built.

In the OGC booklet 'Smaller Supplier, Better Value?'*, we are asked to consider whether we should consider greater usage of smaller firms, and through this:

- Not miss out on suppliers who may be more competitive, and have lower overheads
- Identify smaller suppliers who may be more innovative, and therefore bring more new ideas to the table
- Avoid the danger of capacity issues due to a smaller number of available suppliers, through broadening the resource base

It also reflects on the issues which hold small firms back, typically:

- Not being able to find out about opportunities. When was the last time a subsidence-related invitation to bid by an insurer was actually advertised?

- Bid processes which are both complex and costly, and disproportionate to the risks attached to the work in question
- Potential contract awards which are too large for smaller firms to undertake, unless these small firms operate as consortiums (and equally that purchasers are prepared to accept consortium bids, supported by the right guarantees)

So why should insurers and other purchasers consider smaller firms? The booklet suggests that small firms can offer

- Better levels of service – after all they are more dependent on their client's patronage and may be prepared to go that 'extra mile'
- Better innovation – one of the key ways of differentiating the smaller firm from its competitors
- Greater competition, by bringing a new dynamic to the marketplace though broadening the resource base, and forcing the larger firms to 'sharpen their pencils'

Of course, it's not quite so simple as this.

Larger and broader contracts also clearly have their advantages – better integration, fewer interfaces, easier supplier management, greater opportunity to obtain discounts, greater stability - to name a few. Even with larger contracts, many smaller organisations still find themselves involved through subcontractor arrangements and other indirect relationships. It's clear that one size doesn't fit all. Doesn't our future rest in being fully aware of the options available to us, and being able to make fully informed decisions? Ignoring the smaller supplier entirely in our subsidence thinking could be as bad as throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

* http://www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/CP0083_Small_supplier_better_value.pdf

Tony Boobier tboobier@mda.co.uk

Innovations and the Repair Process

For Small to Medium Enterprises (SME), innovation in the subsidence repair process can be a daily occurrence. From the initial interpretation of a repair specification to actually completing the repair, a certain amount of innovation is required. It is often when the works are underway that innovation comes to the fore. For example, how do you effectively support that foundation whilst allowing sufficient access to underpin it? Many Universities have taken up the challenge to design innovative solutions but we are still left with the question of workability. Can we effectively work around such support systems? In some cases, innovation gives way to common sense and work continues with a hope and a prayer in stable clay soils and a bit of traditional shoring in granular material.

Whilst attempting to innovate, an idea may appear sound but in the execution of it, complications can arise requiring yet more innovation to overcome it. In the current climate, more is expected of SME repairers with less knowledgeable input from 'clients'. In the days when panel engineers were employed and they had sufficient time to oversee projects effectively, contractors could discuss the pros and cons of repair methods with experienced qualified experts, often giving rise to innovative solutions. Overcoming difficulties can be daunting for SME contractors; especially now as any changes they make to the design specification, innovative or not, could be seen as taking on the role of designer under the new CDM Regulations 2007.

Where contractors might like to be innovative is to suggest certain repair products or new methods of working, but this can be viewed that 'there must be something in it for them', or the 'client' does not have authority to sanction it. Contractors may also be reluctant to suggest new methods or products as the 'no blame' culture has not yet filtered down to them.

Of course innovation does not always mean the use of new innovative products or methods, it can also mean learning from the past. The use of hard mortars over the past 40-50 years may have added to the problems of cracking to buildings. An increased lime content in mortars is now being considered more appropriate for new build and in maintaining properties, allowing more flexibility. Whilst SME contractors need to be aware of such trends, they do not always have the opportunity to enlighten their 'clients' of the possible effects and benefits of such revelations.

The very real threat to SME contractors is the apparent desire of insurers to drive down costs by using larger companies who offer economy of scale. There is also the pressure of chasing late payments due often to the protracted supply chain. This is where SME contractors are forced to innovate in order to survive.

SME contractors are in the main, inventive and eager to try new products or equipment, especially if they speed up work and overcome health and safety issues. They are flexible and can embrace new trends more quickly than larger organisations and



Innovative tie bars



What is the best repair approach?

their competitiveness is fuelled by a mixture of camaraderie and fear of failure. Whilst there are still some entrepreneurial SME contractors fired with enthusiasm, it would seem that the opportunities or need for innovation is now being driven by the constant demands of compliance, new building and health and safety regulations, cash-flow problems and more demanding clients.

In order for the insurance industry to continue to benefit from innovative SME contractors, it must take note of the issues

that are currently evolving. Research and development grants are available through various Government bodies and perhaps the insurance industry should consider a grant scheme for the promotion of innovation in subsidence repair. They may even consider awards for 'recognition of services rendered in the face of adversity'.

Ann Nash
anash@bearbrook.co.uk



Unsympathetic repairs

INNOVATION - WELCOME OR WHAT?

ASUCplus members are reporting an increase in workload in the underpinning sector. This is helped mainly due to the dry periods experienced in 2003 and 2006, coupled with the fact that a number of repair schemes carried out at that time have not been successful. Other issues include cases where it has proved impossible to persuade Loss Adjusters to remove trees due to Tree Preservation Orders.

Over the years members of ASUCplus have innovated with new repair or underpinning techniques, but have had to battle against a long-standing culture of resistance to change that appears to be more prevalent in this country than any other in Europe. This may be due to the compensation culture 'imported' from the USA - a fear of failure and maybe a 'why take the risk' approach. It has to be said that the project-managed side of the industry has been more receptive in the past few years, but the consulting engineer has proved to be a difficult nut to crack.

The industry is littered with innovations that have never realised their full potential and yet, insurers ARE quite happy to accept a degree of risk, if that risk is managed in a professional manner.

The plain fact, however, is that innovations are harder to 'sell'. They usually don't have the history of the more commonly used underpinning systems and the perception can be that the policyholder may believe that they are being 'experimented' on! How many times have you heard "come back in 20 years when it has a track record!"

Everyone in this industry is under immense pressure from many directions, not least the Loss Adjusters. You only have to be in this industry for a short time to experience the 'merry-go-round' of staff flitting from one company to the other, often because the pressure has built up so much that the only release is to leave, move on and start afresh elsewhere. As a result it is difficult to find time to explore the innovations that are out there and to assess their benefits.

There is no easy answer to this – we're in a volatile industry. With the best will in the world, it is not practical to have people 'hanging up in a cupboard' waiting for the next event year to come along - and when it does there is a mad scramble for staff to cope with the surge. One possible solution is to continue to educate through the Subsidence Forum using the very successful training days that have proved so popular.

Subsidence claims are all about managing the risk and explaining the various options to insurers so they can make informed decisions as to what techniques to use. The ultimate challenge, however, is to manage policyholders' expectations and we all know through experience how difficult this can be. Great strides have been made over the years in this area with benefits to match.

Innovations aren't just limited to the practical side of the claim. ASUCplus has, over the years, introduced a number of industry innovations including guarantees, health, safety, training and financial audits, all carried out by independent bodies and designed to improve our service and competence. If that competence falls below the standards we expect of our members, we have the teeth to discipline, or in the case of three members recently, expel them from the Association altogether.

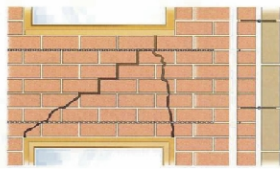
So when you are wading through the new CDM regs and wondering who to use for your next underpinning or repair scheme, ASUCplus members offer a wide range of innovations, techniques and experience both on and off site, with audited competency. And let's not forget the greatest ASUCplus inspired innovation of all - The Subsidence Forum.

Vic Handley vic.handley@van-elle.co.uk
Association of Specialist Underpinning Contractors
www.asuc.org.uk

Is Resin Bonding and Associated Helical Reinforcement being over specified?

The current trend with subsidence repairs is to remove the cause, wait for the building to settle and repair the cracks, hence removing the need for expensive underpinning.

Most specifications drawn up these days seem to automatically scope the works for either resin bonded brickwork repairs on their own or in conjunction with helical reinforcement - brickwork reinforcing techniques. Good for the helical reinforcement



companies, but maybe not so good for the buildings or the insurers picking up the tab for its use.

But why?

If the building is stable the over use of helical reinforcement could cause hard spots in the structure and then any slight differential movement could be reflected in adjacent parts of the structure. Helical reinforcement is a system of brickwork reinforcement that needs to be structurally engineered into a building, not used in isolation or without regard for the surrounding structure.

In Victorian times a lime mortar, more sympathetic to minor movements and distortions was used. The current cement mortars create a hard bed joint that crack easily with slight movements. I question whether we should be using reinforced brickwork methods in older buildings at all? In addition, how many times have we discovered when stripping back external render that beneath lies straight jointed

blockwork where the cracks have manifested themselves differently in the render to what is shown to be behind it?

Reinforced brickwork repairs have their place in the 'tool box' of repairs but should not be regarded as the panacea. It would be like prescribing Aspirin for a broken leg; it might take the edge off the pain but won't cure the basic problem.

The Recent GLA report 'The Chainsaw Massacre' leveled some criticism at insurers for forcing the removal of trees, when these are regarded as an amenity in the community. Whether you agree with the content of the report or not, the implications for insurers financially could be severe, with the need for more expensive underpinning if a tree cannot be removed. Maybe more extensive use of reinforced brickwork could assist here.

My conclusions currently are:

There is nothing wrong with dealing with the causation and going to a repair option.

Reinforced brickwork is suitable in certain circumstances, but is part of an engineered approach and should not be blindly specified without giving consideration to the age and type of property concerned.

If you have a headache, take an Aspirin. If you have a broken leg, have it set in plaster until it heals. Horses for courses I guess is the thought for today.

**Bill Wilson - Co Vice Chairman
NIRCA National Insurance Repair Contractors
Association www.nirca.org.uk**

2007 - NEWLY ELECTED CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR AT SUBSIDENCE FORUM

Update from Chairman Rob Withers.

At the Forum AGM on 1 May, I was delighted to be confirmed as Chairman, having served as Vice Chairman, under the leadership of John Parvin from Zurich insurance, for the last 12 months. This year's Vice Chair is Jill MacLean (formerly Hunt), Technical Manager for Lloyds TSB Insurance. In keeping with many award ceremonies, Jill was unable to accept her VC personally as she was away on honeymoon in Spain (and we couldn't quite manage a video link-up).

Under John's Chairmanship, the Forum has gone from strength to strength and I thank him for his efforts, dedication and commitment.

In addition to attending the four executive meetings a year and the AGM, John has represented the



Rob Withers



Jill MacLean

Forum and reinforced our key messages in discussions and presentations with the British Insurance Brokers Association, the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters, the Property Claims Forum, the Financial Ombudsman Service and the London Tree Officers Association. No mean feat, given he had to juggle Forum work with the demands of his 'day job' as well.

The Forum was set up following the ASUC Plus 'War on Subsidence' conference in 2004 (ASUC is the Association of Specialist Underpinning Contractors). John's election in May 2004 heralded the formation of a Constitution, Steering Groups and subsequent working parties, plus formalised aims and objectives and the creation of a Forum 'window' on our website – www.subsidenceforum.org.uk

Our overriding objective is **'to provide professional and technical competence in all aspects of subsidence practice'**. I'm confident our working parties covering; Supply Chain, Technical, Customer Care/Communications and Innovations help us achieve this.

Back in May 04, the Forum identified a number of key areas that needed addressing;

- 1. Improve general awareness of the public to the issue of subsidence**
- 2. Represent the industry across all levels**
- 3. Improve lines of communication between all parties involved in subsidence**
- 4. Ensure better understanding of the subsidence insurance market by all parties**
- 5. Improve communications with external parties involved in the process, such as Local Authorities for trees, planning and building regulations and Water Authorities for drains and water mains**
- 6. Improve standards throughout the claims process**
- 7. Represent the interests of all parties, including customers, to be able to manage the variable workload volumes, including the payment process**
- 8. Encourage the use of properly trained and audited specialists in all suppliers**
- 9. Ensure appropriate use of warranties and guarantees apply to all aspects of subsidence**
- 10. Improve awareness and practice through the greater understanding of the causes and management of the subsidence risk**

Many would have been daunted by such a long 'wish list', however, under John's leadership the Forum has published a Customer Charter, developed relationships with the media, liaised with the afore-mentioned trade bodies, plus the Building Repair Establishment, National Insurance Repair Contractors Association, the Association of British Insurers and ASUC Plus, hosted a subsidence training day, created a website for knowledge exchange, established a Tree Root and Drainage Protocol, set up a memorandum of agreement and delivered a handbook.

Activities in 2006 included; training sessions with CILA, revamping of a more user-friendly website with new logo, election of Vice Chairman, launch of Innovations newsletter, production of paper on supplier payment issues, enhanced governance re; the introduction of Directors & Officers insurance for the executive team and press briefings.

John's been supported in his Forum work by an executive team comprising;

Myself as Vice Chair, Jill MacLean, Lloyds TSB, Geoff Davies, Ellipta, Tony Boobier, MDA, John Wickham, Greenwoods, Gary Strong, GAB Robins, Nick Deakin R&SA, Nigel Barham, Cunningham Lindsey and Craig Cook, RBS.

Upon invitation, the executive meetings were also attended by John Farthing, Garwyns (representing CILA's Special Interest Group), David Eldridge, Norwich Union and Iain MacLean, Davies and Co.

And so to the future. I recognise that all Forum members have full-time salaried positions and therefore any contributions to events and meetings are appreciated. But, as is the case with many voluntary activities, delivering on promises made at meetings can be difficult because of the day job.

However, Jill and I intend to set achievable targets and ensure we deliver on key issues. Customer Care/Communications and Innovations have been strong areas in the past three years with perhaps Technical and the Supply Chain groups not quite so prominent.

Although communication is crucial for successful claims handling, it is an area where we lack training and resource. Gary Strong is therefore exploring the possibility of having a trained psychologist to host one of the sessions at this year's training day, at BRE Garston on 10 October. Jill and I would like communication to be the main focus in October it will be the link for all workshops.

Forum critics may say not much has been achieved, I counter that we do indeed demonstrate how we put the theory into practice and are much more than a 'talking shop'. Consider the achievements over the past three years, especially the adoption of the Tree Root and Drainage Protocols, plus regular monthly updates on the website detailing claims numbers and indicators during summer 06, courtesy of Nigel Barham, Cunningham Lindsey.

I look forward to the challenges ahead in the next 12 months and believe having a contractor and insurer in the top two positions of the Forum will provide a balanced outlook. Although at opposite ends of the supply chain, we're in a good position to ensure all parties involved in the subsidence claims process have their views represented at executive meetings (and we're mindful that our ultimate customer is the policyholder). It didn't go unnoticed that one of Jill's first calls upon her return from honeymoon was to me as Chairman with the opening gambit: "So what can I do to help?" This ethos of co-operation is clearly evident amongst all 70 plus members.

We both look forward to a fruitful year, building upon the successes of John Parvin's chairmanship, living up to his expectations (as immediate past chairman he still wisely sits on the executive committee) and moving forward in this ever-changing environment in which we all operate.

Rob Withers – Chairman Subsidence Forum
Robert.Withers@withers-group.co.uk

BRE ANNOUNCE NEW SUBSIDENCE GUIDE

Subsidence damage to domestic buildings: a guide to good technical practice was commissioned by the BRE Trust as part of its support for the Subsidence Forum.

The guide follows on from earlier work commissioned by the BRE Trust and published in 2000 as Subsidence damage to domestic buildings: lessons learned and questions remaining. It also draws on Has your house got cracks? A homeowners guide to subsidence and heave damage which was partially sponsored by BRE.

This guide deals only with technical and engineering aspects of subsidence: the diagnosis, investigation, repair, prevention and mitigation of building cracking and deformation. Its aim is to provide guidance that can be used for training or as a simple aide-memoire to ensure that

decisions are based on practices and information that are the best that are available to the industry.

While the guide has been compiled from well recognised reference documents that describe the latest information and procedures, it has also drawn upon the opinions of key members of the industry who have published and presented at seminars on solving subsidence cases. The authors have also relied upon 25 years' experience at BRE researching subsidence problems, and latterly upon experiences gained while providing a consultancy service for difficult, disputatious cases.

The guide will be published in June 2007 and will be available from the BRE Bookshop (www.brebookshop.com).

NEWS HEADLINES

THE BRE ESSENTIAL READING LIST

An up to date list of BRE publications relating to subsidence is now available on the Subsidence Forum website

Further information can be obtained from bookshop@bre.co.uk

GREATER LONDON ASSEMBLY

The GLA recently published a document 'Chainsaw Massacre' a copy of which has been circulated to Subsidence Forum members. John Parvin has been at the forefront for the Forum regarding Tree Root Protocols and meetings with the London Tree Officers Association and further meetings are scheduled. The ABI has provided input into the GLA enquiry.

REMOTE MONITORING

Following up the article in the last newsletter, crack and level monitoring specialist - SP Property Services - shared its expertise and latest technology with BBC television and appeared on 'What's Under Your House' with Fiona Bruce on 28 February.

UNDERPINNING

New Civil Engineer (24 May 2007) has featured a series of articles looking at underpinning developments. City of York Council has stabilised a house in the city centre using Uretex's Power Pile method which uses innovative resin bag piles.

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.dti.gov.uk/innovation/index.html

Innovation – the successful exploitation of new ideas is the key business process that enables UK businesses to compete effectively in the increasingly competitive global environment. The DTI is working to stimulate a significant increase in innovation throughout the economy.

These pages provide advice on finance and investment and on management and skills. They explore the vital role of research and development and explain how businesses can access the practical support available for R&D and innovative projects. They also cover innovation in Europe and UK and European Standards. Case studies of success show how companies are creating new products, services and markets to beat the competition.

