

Interview

PUMP CENTRE HISTORY

1992

The Pump Centre was formed with financial support from the Department of Trade & Industry. The initial purpose of the Centre was to provide a lead role in the transfer of technology between manufacturers and end-users.

2006

The Pump Centre conference moved to a hotel in Runcorn, Cheshire, with large conferencing facilities. Soon the exhibitors were crammed into every space. The earliest conferences had been held in small hotels.

2012

For its 20th Anniversary, the Pump Centre moved to Telford International Centre and the event attracted well over 60 exhibitors and 700 attendees. It is now signed up to a three-year commitment to the Telford venue.



Condition-based maintenance and smarter use of real-time data from pumps will be increasingly important as the water industry heads into AMP6, says Pump Centre Chairman Mike Rush

With around 1000 delegates expected at this year's Pump Centre Conference & Exhibition, and a growing number of exhibitors and sponsors, the event has gone from strength to strength since moving from its Runcorn to Telford for its 20th anniversary in 2012. The theme of this year's conference is 'Pumping Best Practice for 2020' and as water companies across the country head into AMP6, there is no better time to plan for the future and consider how the use of pumps in the industry will evolve over the next five years.

Mike Rush, Chairman of the Pump Centre and Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Manager at United Utilities, says that the regulator's emphasis on Totex in this AMP period should mean that more water companies concentrate on condition-based maintenance and the use of real-time data.

"A lot of pumps already provide us with real-time data, but what's going to be interesting over the next few years is the way in which we as an industry use that data," says Rush. "Because of the Totex approach, there will be more scope for looking at the performance of pumps,

when you run them, and when you intervene with them. It's something that water companies will want to make better use of in AMP6.

"Condition-based maintenance is not a panacea, but if you know that performance is starting to drift, then getting in before a pump breaks, rather than waiting for it to break, is a much better, more efficient way of doing things."

Rush adds that longer-term alliances and framework agreements which are now being signed in the industry should also promote a genuine partnership approach between water companies and the supply chain, and a greater collective approach to problem solving.

Ever since it was founded, the Pump Centre has been based on the principle of collaboration and knowledge-sharing between pump users, manufacturers and suppliers. This year sees the award for the first time of a Pump Project of the Year Award, which is being given to a project to refurbish Thames Water's Littleton Raw Water Pumping Station (see page 16) and Rush says that this was a fitting example of such principles.

"That collaborative ethos has always been very important for the Pump Centre,

it has worked well and has led it to its current state of good health," says Rush. "So when we were considering a Pump Project of the Year award we were looking for something that had that collaboration, where you've got a thorny problem that all parties were working together to solve. Littleton was a good candidate for that – the upgrade of a 90-year old pumping station that was a real collaboration between Thames and Boultong. It highlights what the Pump Centre is there for."

United Utilities has tens of thousands of pumps, and Rush says that his team of 50 mechanical and electrical engineers find the conference and exhibition a vital event for brushing up on their skills and keeping abreast of the latest products.

"A range of engineers, from principals and seniors down to juniors, attend and there is something for everybody," concludes Rush. "Where you might not be able to spare the time or money to attend a one day course on cavitation for example, here you can drop in for a quick refresher of 20 minutes in one of the 'back to basics' breakout sessions. The combination of the breakout sessions, technical papers and some very good exhibitor stands, means it's a very good mix."