

New BESA President Curran embraces digital age

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Claire Curran, managing director of building services specialists Linaker, has been elected President of the [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) for 2023/24.

Described as “a progressive and passionate professional”, Curran has almost 25 years’ experience in the building services industry having previously worked for GSH, ISS, Kier, and Wates.

She has a business and marketing degree, financial qualifications, and an MBA, and says her experience of “hanging around plant rooms for far too long” has also stood her in good stead.

Curran is a former winner of the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) Excellence in a Major Project Award and was also on the shortlist for construction Leader of the Year. She is a strong believer in training and empowering young engineers and has ambitious plans to expand Linaker’s apprenticeship programme.

In her speech to this year’s BESA Annual General Meeting, she thanked members for showing faith in her and giving her the opportunity to give something back to an industry “that has given me so much”.

She said her presidential year would be marked by considerable change with an acceleration in the adoption of digital systems and a deepening of the impact of new safety legislation.

“The way we are regulated is changing in the most profound way since the Second World War through the Building Safety Act, which is not just about safety, by the way,” said Curran. “It is about the whole process of delivering projects because you can’t make buildings safer if you keep working in the same way. So, for compliance we must take a close look at everything we do.”

She also said businesses were being digitised “at a rapid rate” and urged the industry to embrace the way communication and information capture was changing.

“Artificial intelligence is here. You can either fight it and get left behind or get on board and be a thought leader. AI is out and is not going back in its box,” said Curran.

Fantastic data

“My business is all about operating buildings and making them better and to do that successfully you need fantastic data with great in-depth analysis. Harnessing AI to some of the digital improvements we have already made like 4D modelling, APIs and data mining will make us more efficient and productive.”

She pointed out that tight profit margins and skills shortages made it more important than ever that building services firms operated “effectively and efficiently”.

“We must be flexible, available and create well-informed change at pace. As we move deeper into this digital age, we will see more ‘real life’ operating information being harvested at astonishing speeds and then used to create strategies for reducing energy and carbon, and for keeping buildings safe and compliant,” she said.

She added that the “digital takeover” would require “completely new skills” but was also “an amazing opportunity to reach out to the new generation and state our case for being their career of choice” so they could contribute “to a better, greener future”.

The new President said she would continue to respect and build on the history of the Association, which will celebrate its 120th anniversary next year. She said she would be working hard to ensure BESA continued to lead on “safety, digitisation, net zero, diversity, and indoor air quality”.

She cited SFG20 – the industry standard for building maintenance – as an example of technical innovations developed by BESA that would play a crucial role far into the future.

“SFG20 is a tool that will be playing a massive part in the way buildings are managed and maintained. A tool we need to develop at pace to ensure it remains the Number One standard for maintenance in the built environment.

“This kind of digital innovation will be key to delivering safer and more sustainable buildings – because it provides deep analysis of the way a building is operating. With this ‘real life’ information being mined at 48,000 data points per second, the positive outcomes are endless,” said Curran.

“By the end of my term, I hope to have created some pace, and cleared room for us to use all our amazing, pooled knowledge and skills in the most productive way taking advantage of all the new tools available to us.”