

BESA grieving death of former president Rab Fletcher

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The [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) has announced the death of “hugely popular and highly respected” former President Robert (Rab) Fletcher after a lengthy battle with cancer.

He was President of the Association in 2022/23 and was mechanical services team manager at Fife Council Building Services. He had more than 30 years’ experience in construction and building services engineering – but always modestly described himself as “a time served plumber”.

Fletcher also served as chairman of BESA Scotland for several years and was one of the founders of the BESA Local Authority Forum, which he also chaired. This influential network forged strong links between public sector specifiers and Scottish contractors. It included representatives from every local council in Scotland who met regularly to address key industry topics and find solutions to common problems. Its meetings attracted more than 500 attendees every year.

Fletcher worked for the £130m turnover building services division of Fife Council for nearly 30 years having started in a plumbing role before progressing through the ranks to supervisor and co-ordinator.

He was promoted to team manager in 2012 where he was responsible for delivering an annual £15m programme of more than 2,000 domestic heating installations for council tenants. From 2017 he also oversaw all the mechanical services in Fife Council’s 3,000 non-domestic properties.

On taking up the BESA Presidency, Fletcher said he was delighted to be the latest in a long line of presidents from a devolved nation further strengthening BESA’s unique position as the only built environment trade body representing all four UK countries.

Influence

"Our enduring strength and influence depend on our ability to speak with a collective voice on behalf of the whole industry – and we are not afraid to speak 'truth to power' wherever that power may sit," he said.

Fletcher also spoke about the difficult economic conditions and their impact on the building engineering sector, but always remained optimistic.

"This Association has a proud history and we its members are fortunate that we can call on the collective experience and expertise of members past and present," he said. "The 'BESA Community' has given us an amazing repository of technical know-how and business experience.

"This means we are well placed to navigate choppy waters – and it is always better to do that together, as part of a community of like-minded people and firms, rather than having to work out the best way forward on your own."

Fletcher was a powerful advocate of young engineers and a committed champion of apprenticeships. He was lead mentor for Fife Council Building Services mechanical apprentices, of which there were often more than 30 working in plumbing/gas and mechanical disciplines. He intervened personally to ensure several were taken on by the council after being made redundant by private employers.

Chief executive officer David Frise said the whole BESA community was in mourning.

"Rab was a delightful man who worked extremely hard on behalf of our members during a difficult period for the industry," he said. "Despite his own health struggles, he remained extremely generous with his time and support, providing inspirational leadership throughout his time as President and as an officer.

"Everyone who met Rab is mourning his loss and we will all miss his cheerful personality and wise counsel."