

# CHANGE JUST AHEAD



**Neil Pollock**

is Sales Director for the North East Region at KOREC Group

As Bob Dylan sang, ‘the times they are a changing’, and never a truer word was said when it comes to Brexit and surveying. Deal or No Deal, **Neil Pollock** studies the options

As we stare down the barrel of an uncertain relationship with our European cousins, we could all be forgiven for feeling a little nervous. Change is often a force for good, but when change is out of our hands many of us feel we would like to batten down the hatches and wait for a more certain landscape to reveal itself before we invest in technology.

**Keep calm and carry on**

In, out, deal or no deal, hard Brexit or soft Brexit? I’m sure we all accept that our industry is going to be affected in a big way. This may be positive or negative but it is coming. We know that we simply cannot stop working, geospatial professionals need to carry on designing, changing and improving our environment, but at the same time many of us will be tightening the purse strings until we have more certainty. At times like these we are less likely to be looking to invest in the ‘nice to have’. At times like this, Return on Investment (RoI) is king. We need to work, but we need our technology to work for us and offer the best returns by increases in speed, efficiency and usability.

Thankfully it would appear that our willing geospatial manufacturers are on the same page. I have written before about the staggering rate of hardware and software development in our industry. So how is the latest tech allowing us to improve our workflows and give us the type of returns we need whilst not keeping us awake at night worrying about the pounds and pence?

Tasks that once required hours of post-site office time are now being carried out in real time, on-site. Laser scanning is a mainstay of our industry now and many of us, myself included, will remember returning from a day’s scanning only to sit, for hours or days, manually stitching scans together and crossing our fingers that we had collected all of the data that we needed. All of this is at a cost (not myself you understand ... my wages were meagre at best).

**Smart moves**

Recent advances have revealed that this process is now done on-board scanners, in

real-time, with live checking of data quality entirely possible. When the day’s scanning is done, it’s done. One manufacturer is now going further and allowing data to be taken directly from a scanner into almost any scanning, drawing or modelling package, therefore allowing people to utilise their existing software suite rather than forcing the use of proprietary software. A smart move and one that guarantees RoI straight from the get-go with no re-training in new software packages or lengthy file conversions.

A further expense when investing in geospatial technology is maintenance. High tech kit requires specialist care and attention, often costing thousands of pounds per year. As such, the whole life cost of equipment can be vastly increased by calibrations and servicing. However, we now see that manufacturers are beginning to address this expensive thorn in the side by producing kit that requires little or no maintenance and as such can be out in the field earning its keep

24/7 without any down time. Step forward Trimble’s new X7 which was developed with a strong focus on ROI – lower hardware, software, training and maintenance costs – and which, among many other things, self-calibrates.

**Ring-in the change**

So how do we approach the coming months? One stance would be to sit tight, wait and keep those wallets well and truly closed until we have some certainty. Another would be to embrace the change, embrace the technological advances that allow us to work faster and smarter and maximise our Return on Investment and potential with fabulous new developments in hardware and software.

No matter how the remainder of 2019 plays out, one thing is for sure. Our fantastic industry will continue to develop, innovate and improve as it always has done. Remember “life is like underwear, change is good.”

Moving with the times: The Trimble X7



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