

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

In these dark times, **Neil Pollock** looks for the light at the end of the tunnel and believes geo skills will be vital in getting the country and the economy up-and-running again



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We are living through challenging and unprecedented times. Over the past months that I have been researching and writing this column, one theme about our industry has presented itself above all others - resilience. Our history, indeed, the history of mankind, is littered with crises and challenges. Some see these as a reason to panic, hunker down or run away, but wherever we look at the history of the geospatial professional, we see those people who saw an obstacle to be overcome, even an opportunity. Far from turning our backs, as professionals we have tackled these challenges head on.

War effort

During the terror and turmoil of WW2 hundreds of thousands of men and women from the UK volunteered for the war effort, some of them finding their way to a little-known group called MI4. Not for these brave souls the glamour of MI5 or the Intrigue of MI6. Although part of the Intelligence services, these were not spies but surveyors.

Their role was to supply maps to the armed forces, collect data on foreign survey networks, provide training and prepare survey data for Expeditionary Force mobilisation. This was critical work that was being carried out by our vocational forbears, work that saved lives.

This is one example among thousands where our counterparts have stepped up to challenges and used their geospatial skill sets to help others.

Essential work

Take the recently constructed Nightingale Hospital in London, at capacity it would be one of the largest hospitals in the world and it was constructed in just nine days. This

would not be possible without the input of designers, engineers and surveyors. Similar projects are underway throughout the UK and all of them require the skills of our community to complete. This is essential work being carried out by our fantastic fellow geospatial professionals.

While some are still toiling, many of us will be locked away at home as workplaces close and we are instructed to stay indoors. The term 'Key Worker' has been used frequently to highlight those that are required to continue working to keep our country going. While not all of us fall into this category, it is worth noting the sectors into which 'Key Workers' fall.

Transport, utilities, communication, local government to name a few. If we were all to cast our minds back through the past projects we have completed, I can guarantee that we have worked in one, if not all of these sectors. Our skills help to keep essential infrastructure, such as oil, gas, electricity, water and sewerage operating. We may not all be classed as 'KEY' right now but we should be proud of the day-to-day work we do in these sectors to keep our economy and our country moving.

For those of us sheltering at home, it may feel like a dark time because we are all workers. We are used to applying our minds and bodies to completing a task and reaping the rewards and satisfaction that brings. But that's what we are doing. It may feel alien, but nothing happening means nothing is happening to you and your loved ones.

Stay safe and stay positive because when normality returns, and it will return, you will be needed more than ever. Once again, the key workers continuing to design, build and improve our world.

As Winston Churchill said, "When you are going through Hell, keep going"