

## Noel Morrin

**N**oel Morrin is the Senior Vice President Sustainability of Skanska. An Irishman educated in biology and chemistry and with a background in construction, business and the environment, Noel Morrin joined Skanska's head office on 1 October 2005 with the mission of continuing the sustainability effort.

His previous positions include Group Environmental Director for RMC, the world's largest producer of ready mixed concrete, as well as senior roles at Imperial Chemical Industries, the UK National Environmental Technology Centre and NGO Business in the Environment. Noel Morrin is a graduate of the National University of Ireland.

**ISO Focus:** As one of the top three construction services companies in the world, what types of ISO standards are important for the management of your 12 000 projects?

**Noel Morrin:** At Skanska we are committed to ensuring that our customers' investments yield the highest possible returns, whilst working in a sustainable manner by for example, making sure that their building is constructed efficiently and then functions well during use so that important aspects like energy efficiency are optimized.

Therefore, building would be almost impossible without standards. Up to 70% of project costs can be related to purchasing. Standards enable us to compare products and services efficiently. In order to achieve this, we use ISO standards as well as ISO management systems and several guidance standards. The two most recognized standards at Skanska are: ISO



**“Sustainable business means sustainable profits generated whilst being socially and environmentally responsible.”**

9001, adhered to by 65% of our Business Units and ISO 14001 with 100% coverage. Additionally, we have based part of our information security management system on ISO/IEC 27001.

The level of deployment of ISO standards determines their strength and risk. For example, the more standards

are implemented, the more business opportunities can be maximized and risks minimized to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Finally, we also pride ourselves on developing in-house standards tailored to specific needs that reinforce day-to-day operational performance.

**ISO Focus:** How have ISO International Standards helped Skanska to grow and progress?

**Noel Morrin:** Following a serious environmental accident in 1997, we reviewed our environmental policies and took the decision to implement the ISO environmental management standard throughout the company. Today, all Skanska Business Units are certified to ISO 14001.

There were several advantages to this, namely **1)** the ability to offer added value to our customers, users and investors, as well as **2)** giving us the competitive edge and **3)** winning certain projects where ISO 14001 was part of the bidding process.

We see this ISO standard as a basic risk management and continual improvement system. It has also helped us to identify and subsequently avoid certain projects where the environmental risks were just too great for a responsible company such as Skanska. Other advantages include the creation of a common language and definitions which are especially beneficial in supply chain and information management.

**ISO Focus:** What is, in your view, the business case for investing in socially responsible actions that may not be immediately beneficial to productivity or the bottom line or economic success in a competitive market?



Skanska headquarters in Solna, outside Stockholm, Sweden.

## “Today, all Skanska Business Units are certified to ISO 14001.”

**Noel Morrin :** For the seventh consecutive year, Skanska is ranked as one of the world’s leading construction companies in terms of commitment to sustainable development as assessed by the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes, a listing of some 300 international companies that meet high standards of environmental, economic and social performance.

Sustainable business means sustainable profits generated whilst being socially and environmentally responsible. At Skanska we want to be an industry leader in technology as well as safety, ethics and the environment. Most business today cannot afford to overlook these important aspects. We are motivated to take the risks and responsibilities needed to contribute to the sustainable societies and markets around the world, while simultaneously adding value to our products and services. This principle is clear. What is less clear is how fast and how much ?

Skanska has taken up the challenge of integrating sustainable development so that our Business Units worldwide strike a prudent balance between economic, social and environmental performance acceptable to legitimate stakeholders – the triple bottom line – and if ISO standards are developed or revised with this in mind, they gain much greater and thus well deserved recognition.

**ISO Focus:** How do standards support sustainable development in the construction sector ?

*The Millennium Bridge, almost a kilometre long, crosses over the Oder River, in Wroclaw, Poland. The bridge is part of a new bypass highway around Wroclaw that will ease the traffic congestion on the city’s central bridges.*



**Noel Morrin :** The construction industry has a constant challenge to do everything possible to protect the environment and safety of its workplace and employees. At Skanska our Code of Conduct demands Zero Accidents and Zero Environmental Incidents. In

*Pilestraedet Park – an urban ecological residential area in central Oslo, Norway. The Park serves as a role model on how environmental issues can be integrated in all aspects of construction, resulting in a building with substantially lower needs for energy and clear environmental product declarations.*





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Southwest Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. Petersburg, Russia. The plant will have an average daily capacity of 330 000m<sup>3</sup> and treat the wastewater from 720 000 of St. Petersburg's 5 million inhabitants.

order to deliver this, our Business Units must incorporate sustainable building principles from its initial planning stage that will last well beyond the finished product. There are many different types of documents that are referred to as International Standards, which we use or include in our own standards and policies. Sources include ISO, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations, not to mention regional and national standards from, for example, the European Union and the USA. Our CEO, Stuart Graham, often refers to standards as a set of criteria that we need to use in order to perform according to Skanska policies and targets. They are vital in supporting our goal of developing business that is simultaneously safer, less environmentally damaging and more profitable.

**ISO Focus:** *Skanska is a member of the UN Global Compact – one of the most important processes on social responsibility in the world. What added value would you see in the International Standard giving guidelines on social responsibility being developed by ISO (cf. ISO 26000)?*

**“Standards enable us to compare products and services efficiently.”**

**Noel Morrin:** We have taken a very active role in the process of developing the future ISO 26000 guidance standard on social responsibility. My colleague, Staffan Söderberg, is currently the Vice Chair of the international working group. Our reason for this level of involvement is simple; we believe ISO 26000 may be one of the tools that we need in structuring and formalizing relations with our stakeholders. The social responsibility guidance standard will be written to fit all

types of organizations, not only large corporations. It will thus facilitate communication and work flow between Skanska Business Units and, for example, clients, employees and suppliers, as well as NGOs, consumers, academia and other parties with a legitimate interest in our activities. The UN Global Compact and others in the vanguard will be addressed in ISO 26000, and hopefully, benefit from the wide spread international channels of information dissemination that ISO can provide.

**ISO Focus:** *In a company like Skanska whose survival depends on innovation, how do ISO International Standards allow the industry to move forward?*

**Noel Morrin:** Sometimes standards may hamper innovation. But, that said, well-developed standards set baselines from which real innovation can take place. In our industry, we see great advantages to the standardization of products and materials. Benefits include reducing time and costs



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*Swiss Re in London, England. The structure is designed to be environmentally-friendly. Its aerodynamic shape assists natural ventilation by drawing fresh air in through lightwells spiraling up the building, reducing the need for conventional air conditioning and, as a result, energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. The lightwells also maximize natural light to limit reliance on artificial lighting. Decentralized systems at each level allow air conditioning to be supplied on a floor-by-floor basis to match supply and demand, conserving energy consumption.*

## About Skanska

Skanska is the world leader in construction-related services and project development, with 54 000 employees working in nine home markets: Argentina, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Founded in 1887, the company started by manufacturing cement products and quickly diversified into construction and moved into international markets.

Today, Skanska is working on some 12 000 projects in four business streams: construction, including both residential and civil (such as tunnels and bridges), residential project development (such as office buildings, shopping centres and logistics properties) and infrastructural development (such as roads, hospitals and power generation plants). For example, the company is responsible for the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in the United Kingdom, the Millennium Bridge in Wroclaw, Poland, and several power plants in New York, the USA. For more information, see [www.skanska.com](http://www.skanska.com)

effort to clearly describe and measure the top and bottom line benefits.

What we would like to see coming out of ISO is a greater involvement of stakeholders in the standard developing process. A possibility would be to strengthen the common ISO process used by national delegations, which are comprised of experts mainly from industry and predominantly of people already familiar with ISO processes. It is very important that standards be easily adapted by industry, regardless of their culture and linguistic differences. Take, for instance, the success of the ISO working group on social responsibility that includes the participation of experts from different stakeholder groups – from both developing and developed countries. Another is the way that the quality standard ISO 9000 created the conditions for widespread adoption of Total Quality Management. TQM was the philosophy and ISO was the tool. ■

and enable global usage. Our CEO often says that “Skanska should act as an agent for change” and helping the market identify and disseminate relevant and efficient standards is a part of that role.

**ISO Focus:** *What new International Standards would Skanska like to see coming out of ISO?*

**Noel Morrin :** We need relevant standards to cover all our businesses – large, medium and small. We are not so much asking for new standards, but rather for a greater integration and use of existing ones. For example, we believe that it is more important to focus efforts on universal implementation and less on new standards, as my experience readily demonstrates the limited uptake of existing standards. The real challenge is the need to map such standards to the complexities of “real world” conditions and more

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*Skanska has begun building the first Swan eco-labeled home called “Uniqhus” in the Nordic region. In addition to employing environmentally compatible materials and work methods, the eco-labeled home must also be able to show a lower life-cycle cost with lower consumption of energy, for example.*