

# Rig rentals... A foundation for success?

Steph Keane, sales director for ground engineering and rock drilling specialist, Skelair International, shares some insights into the state-of-play for UK rig rentals

**W**hile there are clearly pros and cons which must be evaluated against current business needs and potential future requirements, the role of rig rentals has become increasingly prominent in recent years. The uncertainty of Brexit could be blamed for some companies choosing to hire rather than commit to capital expenditure, but that does not give a true picture of what is really happening in the drilling rig market.

As a company that offers machines for both purchase and hire, Skelair has first-hand experience of how the market is moving. While there has been a noticeable upturn in the volume of rig purchases over the past 12 to 18 months, which applies to both new and pre-owned machines, the rental market has been equally, and in some cases, arguably, more buoyant. The drivers behind renting drill rigs vary from business to business. Some require a specialist machine to meet the unique performance requirements of a one-off project. Others need to temporarily upscale operations in line with increased customer demand. However, most interesting, in terms of a market trend, are those companies who make a conscious decision to rent rather than purchase, as part of a long-term business development strategy.

One such company is Knightbuild, which regularly rents Klemm rigs from Skelair. Having worked with Skelair for 20 years, Oliver Gentle, director, believes this strategy has made the business highly agile and responsive to both client and project needs: "Renting rigs gives us the ultimate in flexibility because we

hire a specific machine to suit the performance requirements of each job. In doing so, we never have any rigs left idle – we are only ever paying for the time that we are live on-site.

"We've found that this gives us the opportunity to work across smaller and larger projects and be able to rent the rig that best matches what is needed. This makes us efficient and cost-effective as we are not using heavy duty rigs where a smaller machine would be suitable."

The preferred rig for Knightbuild is the Klemm series. Over the years, Gentle has rented a range of models, including the KR 702-2, KR 708-3, and more recently the new KR 709-3G.

Replacing the Klemm KR 709-2 which launched to market in 2008; the newest machine significantly enhances European Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC conformity and is delivering a major two-step advance to EEC 97/68 Stage 4, respectively USA EPA/CARB Tier 4f.

This was one factor which attracted Gentle to hiring the KR 709-3G on his most recent project at Holland Park in London. "The majority of our work is London-based, which

means we need to keep pace with the changes in emission standards. By renting rigs, we benefit from access to the very latest models, which means our 'fleet' never becomes outdated."

For Knightbuild, being able to deploy the latest Klemm rig without having to make major capital expenditure delivered far-reaching site benefits: "Holland Park was a development which required piling down to 39m.

"With a relatively small footprint the rig also made it easier for the team to get into tighter spaces, and the remote-control function simplified a lot of on-site manoeuvring."

With Holland Park now near completion, Knightbuild is already making plans for its next project and evaluating which Skelair machine will best meet its needs: "The reason we partner with Skelair for rentals wherever possible is because we know the machines and service are extremely reliable.

"We know that every rig we hire from Skelair is maintained to a high standard, so we never experience downtime on-site. Essentially, the Skelair rental fleet is an extension of our own business," concluded Gentle. ♥

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*Klemm machinery is used extensively in the Skelair rental fleet*