



ALE at work on a motorway bridge improvement project in the UK.

Striking a balance

Finding a balance between finance and politics is crucial to the execution of major civil projects. This balance, however, can be difficult to strike and the means of keeping all parties happy vary from continent to continent.

Javier Martinez, executive director for UK-based heavy lift and transport engineering specialist ALE, has witnessed a different set of client challenges unfolding across the civil infrastructure market.

“We are seeing an increasing number of European companies leading important projects overseas,” he explained.

“Companies are getting bigger and much more project management focused. Clients need more companies like us that do not just ‘rent a tool’ but provide a bespoke service.

“Some areas have seen sudden growth and local parties do not always have the

experience of large, complex projects, so that can create challenges in communication. Bringing in operators with global expertise can provide reassuring knowledge and ensure the

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Generally speaking, Martinez said the global civil infrastructure market is growing and there are reasons to be optimistic, but cautioned there are “ups and downs” linked to political and financial issues.

In Europe, for example, demand is subdued. There are infrastructure funds for new countries joining the European Union (EU) but the projects are relatively small, he observed.

South America, on the other hand, has interesting civil projects under way in Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Argentina, Martinez noted, adding that from ALE’s perspective there are limited heavy lift opportunities in Asia and Africa.

“While in the USA and Canada there has been a great increase in the civil market for public, private and public-private partnerships (PPP). Many bridges are in poor condition so new ones need to be built and the old ones are being demolished.



planned – before the lifting operation was completed.”

Elsewhere in the USA, there was considerable anticipation surrounding President Trump’s USD1.5 trillion infrastructure spending plan announced in early 2018. However, Erik Zander, director of sales at Oregon-based Omega Morgan, said new projects are yet to materialise.

“Engineering and state agencies continue with designs so they have shovel-ready projects when funding hits, but we have yet to see any trickle-down effect from the earmarked funds,” he noted.

Operating in the Pacific Northwest, Omega Morgan specialises in heavy rigging and machinery moving. Zander said project

complexity is “definitely increasing due to congestion that you did not have 40-50 years ago when this infrastructure was initially put in place.

“This congestion forces the engineering and construction companies to figure out how to build a project with a limited available footprint,” he added.

Overall, he said the civil market in the USA and Canada remains relatively flat. However, he noted renewables projects are “rocking, as well as the associated infrastructure to support these projects”.

This was a point also raised by Belgian heavy lift giant Sarens.

“Take the example of Taiwan,” the firm’s spokeswoman said. “There is a major trend of

“From a heavy lift perspective, the removal of an old bridge will usually be a higher value operation than installing the new one. Particularly in the USA, construction, extension or renovation of stadiums and airports also continue to be a growing market.”

Stadium renovation

Indeed, a USD50 million stadium renovation in the city of Milwaukee saw ALE raise a roof section weighing 400 tonnes, from 11.9 m to 19.8 m. “There was minimal space available at the site, so we devised a jacking solution using eight strand jacks,” explained Martinez.

“One unexpected challenge on the project was the weather, which was more severe than usual for the area. Temperatures fell to -30°C overnight and temporarily prevented the client from continuing welding work.

“Our solution enabled the roof section to be securely held in place, with the weight supported for almost two weeks – three times longer than originally

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