



# Our founder

## A few words from John Bentley, founder and former Managing Director

2022 marks the 50th anniversary of JN Bentley. In this special edition celebratory publication, we take a look back at the history of the company and some of its key milestones, as well as looking forward to what the future holds.

When I look back over the last five decades, I have fond memories of the people and clients I worked with and the many great projects we delivered.

When the business was founded in 1972, the construction industry looked very different to how we see it today. Health and safety standards were almost non-existent until the Health and Safety at Work Act was introduced in 1974; we didn't have the state-of-the-art plant and machinery that is around today and our employee numbers were in the tens rather than thousands.

There have been times when the company has had to overcome challenges: for example, the recession in 1991 and more recently Covid-19. But we have learnt from these difficult periods and with hard work and good humour have come out the other side.

We have always had a presence in the water sector, first working with Yorkshire Water in 1973, at the time of the Water Act that subsequently led to privatisation of the sector in 1989.

Over the years, we have built our experience and capability to establish a strong reputation in the water industry, creating positive relationships with our clients to help solve their challenges. The key to this is being honest and working with good humour. This has served us well, and in return they have brought stability and growth to the business.

We have also worked with clients like Rolls-Royce and P&G, first building a relationship in the 90s. One of my most memorable projects was constructing a 250,000sq ft factory building in Hawarden in North Wales, for the Metal Improvement Company. This was the biggest factory we ever built, and we delivered the project on time, right first time, and for a good price.

Our reputation has been strengthened by our close partnership with Mott MacDonald who we have worked with since 1999. The combination of their design capability and our contracting expertise allowed us to create a unique offering to clients in the water sector and saw us win our first AMP framework with Yorkshire Water in 1999/2000. This was a real turning point for the business; it gave us stability and meant we had time to plan for the future. What followed was the company's biggest period of growth.

Delivering projects for the right price in the right way, and right first time has always been important and made us successful.

**“Delivering projects for the right price in the right way, and right first time has always been important and made us successful. Our clients trust us and know that we can deliver a good job.”**

Our clients trust us and know that we can deliver a good job. We do our best and get on with it with a 'can-do' attitude – problems are there to overcome.

We are good at what we do and when we know what we're doing, we do it right. To get it right first time, you need people with the same culture, and the same understanding of how we work. Having a directly employed site workforce

– something that wasn't really done in the 70s – and investing in our people with training and development has allowed us to have this consistency. Training isn't a cost, it's an investment. We still take on apprentices and sponsor students studying sandwich courses at university and have a lot of people coming back to work for us when they graduate.

We treat people well and are honest – from this we have a great deal of loyalty. I've always been John, not

Mr Bentley, no hierarchy – you should always look up to people, not down.

Having good relationships with the supply chain is also important and making sure we plan ahead for requirements. Over the years, these relationships have helped us to deliver a number of critical projects for our clients.

Although we have been through big periods of growth, for me it has always been about being the best, not the biggest.

One of the most rewarding things about running the business was simply

knowing what I know – that people, our clients and suppliers trust us.

Growth is important for future success, but we have managed it in the right way, making sure we deliver the best projects for our clients and helping them to solve their challenges in a positive way. We deliver great projects, look after and reward our people and do so without shouting too much about it. Knowing that has been reward enough.

Please join me in celebrating our 50 years. For those that have been with us since the very beginning, I am sure this will spark happy memories. For those newer to the business, welcome. I hope you enjoy taking a look back at our history and that you remain part of our future.

## John.

**Founder and former Managing Director, JN Bentley.**



# Our culture and values

Our 'Care' culture is underpinned by three core values: happy people, keeping people safe and looking after the money. We believe that because we care about what we do, we do things better. This defines our sustainable approach to business.

## When we care for our people, they are happy

Our people are what makes us successful. You can't do anything in this industry without great teams working together, which is why a key focus is 'happy people' – people who enjoy coming to work, who feel valued and take pride in what they do.



We invest heavily in the training and development of our colleagues, supporting them to achieve their goals, reach their potential, and build a successful career with us.

Early careers have long been part of our approach – we've championed apprenticeships, provided year-out and summer placements, sponsored students and recruited talented graduates since the early years, and we continue to reap the benefits of these routes into employment.

## When we take care in our work, we stay safe

There is nothing we care more about than making sure our people go home safe and well at the end of the working day. The standards and processes we have developed and implemented have helped us to achieve industry leading health, safety and environmental performance.

With a commitment for ZERO – to achieve zero injuries and prevent occupational ill health – we know that it is only by working as a team and caring about each other that we will achieve our vision and deliver our Health & Safety Strategy.

Our vision for ZERO also extends to our environment. Without care for the natural environment, we wouldn't have a sustainable business. We treat environmental management with the same rigour as we do health and safety.

In 2021, JN Bentley achieved carbon neutral status for the first time after meeting PAS 2060.



We are also certified against ISO 50001 for Energy Management for the design, construction and building of building and civil, mechanical and electrical projects.

## When we care about the bottom line, we make some money

Driven by our Quality, Cost & Efficiency Strategy, our vision is to achieve quality in a cost and efficient way. Doing so ensures we add value for our clients and continue to thrive as an organisation. Our strategy focuses on:

- achieving right first time (R1T) delivery: delivering the right level of quality at the right cost with maximum efficiency, first time, every time;
- identifying opportunities and mitigating risks;
- effective planning, utilising the tools we have such as our PACE boards and 3 Levels of Planning process to accurately plan and programme projects and;
- identifying and eliminating waste to help achieve R1T delivery.



When we care for our people, they are happy

When we take care in our work, we stay safe

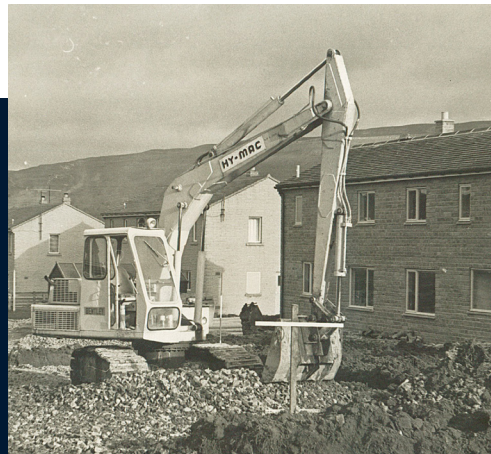
When we care about the bottom line, we make some money

# Our history

# 1970s

1972

JN Bentley was founded with offices in Skipton, North Yorkshire on 7th December 1972 by John Bentley.



To begin with, we were principally involved in water and sewerage works for the water authorities in Bradford and Craven, as well as civil engineering works for local authorities in Yorkshire and East Lancashire.

Working at sites such as Elslack Water Treatment Works and Oldfield Service Reservoir, this experience laid the foundations of the civil engineering activities of the company and our long-standing association with the water industry.



JN Bentley's very first office on Grassington Road had a small downstairs material storage area and space upstairs for two desks. We later moved into offices (pictured above) next to City Electrical Factors on Snaygill Industrial Estate in Skipton - just down the road from where our head office is today.

We occupied the left-hand side of the building and developed the land behind, transforming it from a dumping ground for bits of pipe and wood cut offs, into brand new business units.

1973

Establishing a presence in the water industry early in our history, JN Bentley delivered its first project for Yorkshire Water - a project at Embsay Treatment Works - after they took over Craven Water Board, following the introduction of the Water Act 1973.

1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act was introduced. This marked a shift in the perception of health and safety on sites. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and appropriate training were mandatory provisions as employers had a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of all employees at work.

## Mid-1970s

During the mid-1970s, general building projects took up a large proportion of our workload. Projects included the construction of blocks of flats for local authorities and upgrading factory buildings for clients such as Courtaulds - a textiles company - in Colne, Nelson, Burnley and Carlisle.



Courtaulds company factory in Carlisle.



## Late-1970s

Towards the end of the decade, we moved away from general building and construction works and turned our attention to more challenging civil engineering projects such as pipelines and pumping stations - the type of schemes we still deliver today.



1976: Excavation for Reeth service reservoir.

# 1980s

1986: On site at Rodley Sewage Treatment Works during construction of the new inlet works.



We completed our first of two ambitious, high profile residential development projects in 1987, the second in 1995. The scheme at Linton in the Yorkshire Dales saw us complete the design and build of several luxury homes. We also acquired the old mill building in the village which led to the future development of the Linton Falls Hydro project where we redeveloped the site, installing two Archimedean screw turbines to bring the hydroelectric plant back into operation in 2012.

1987



In 1988, we moved into what remains our Head Office at Snaygill in Skipton.

Prior to this we occupied part of a building on the same industrial estate, next to City Electrical Factors who remain there today. After developing the site during the 70s and 80s, we left to move into the building we now know as our Head Office.

1988



We held a whole-company training weekend in Spain to discuss plans for taking the company forward and look at creating units within the business, including a centralised buying department. This resembled a (very) early version of what we now know as our collaborative MMBC Support Unit and Operational Units.

1989



We increased the range and scale of our building projects in the 1980s, completing a number of successful industrial building projects and our first high profile residential housing development.

Clients included the Metal Improvement Company (MIC), for whom we delivered our first £1m project - a 250,000sq ft factory building used for 'peening' British Airways aircraft wings, a process that helps strengthen and shape the metal - in Hawarden in Wales. The late 1980s saw us awarded our largest industrial contract to date when Hepworth Drainage commissioned us to construct the largest concrete pipe production plant in Europe, near Coalville in Leicestershire.

Our relationship with prestigious client Rolls-Royce began in the late 1980s too;

our first scheme at their Bankfield site in Barnoldswick saw us construct a modern production facility to manufacture fan blades. Our experience sees us continue to work for Rolls-Royce to this day.

The decade also marked a turning point for investment in people and plant. We continued our focus on building a skilled directly-employed labour force, fundamental in ensuring a consistent approach to health and safety standards and quality right first time delivery, ensuring the best solutions for our clients.

We also purchased our first new machines - three brand-new excavators - paving the way for our nearly 300 strong modern-day fleet, which now includes 174 excavators!

## Early-1980s

Towards the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, JN Bentley delivered a variety of schemes at Burnley Paper Mill in Lancashire. This included demolition works (pictured) which we carried out ahead of laying foundations for a new building.



# 1990s

1990

In 1990 we held a second company training seminar in Switzerland – in the days when it was more cost effective to hold such events abroad than in the UK. This prompted the start of JN Bentley's journey to achieving BS 5750, the British Standard for Quality Systems, what we now know as ISO 9001.



As local contractors, we constructed the new Skipton Auction Mart, just down the road from our Head Office. The works involved removing around 100,000 tons of earth, bringing in 100,000 tons of stone and topping it with 16,000 tons of concrete and installing miles of tubular fencing to create pens.



1990: Construction starts on the new Skipton Auction Mart.



1995

An extremely hot and dry summer in 1995 resulted in a drought across the UK, with rapidly declining river and reservoir levels and water supply disruption. We were commissioned at short notice to carry out rapid-response works to aid the tankering of water around Yorkshire. The initial works were followed by the installation of a number of strategic pipelines and pumping stations, including a pipeline running from Eccup to Graincliffe in West Yorkshire.

1995 also saw JN Bentley complete its second high profile residential building project. We purchased a redundant paper mill on the River Kent at Cowan Head, between Windermere and Kendal, and converted it into 60 luxury, award-winning apartments.



1999

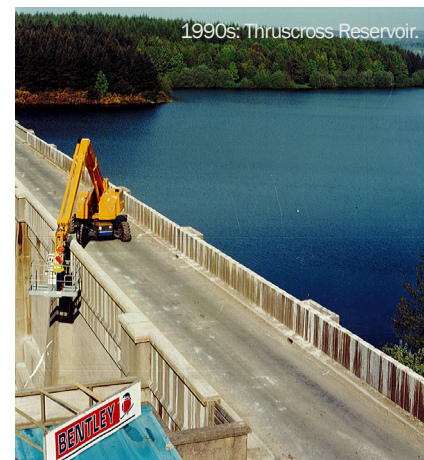
Mott MacDonald Bentley (MMB) was born. Established to bid Yorkshire Water's AMP3 design and build framework, the end of the 90s sparked the beginning of our long-standing partnership with global engineering consultancy, Mott MacDonald.

MMB brought and continues to bring a unique offering to clients in the water sector and beyond. Harnessing the design expertise of Mott MacDonald colleagues and JN Bentley's contracting experience and reputation in the water industry, MMB provides a fully integrated design and build service and has been the cornerstone for the company's continued success in the water industry.



The evolution of MMB's logo, 1999 to 2022.

Paul Bentley was also made a director in 1999 and moved into the role of Managing Director when John Bentley stepped back the following year.



1990s: Thruscross Reservoir.

The 1990s saw a more civil engineering-focused business once again, particularly through ever strengthening links with Yorkshire Water. The business developed core skills in the waste sector too – adding clients including Yorwaste and Water Recycling Group in the early 2000s.

A recession in the UK made the early 90s a challenging time for businesses. But, as is evidenced over the years, JN Bentley withstood the difficulties, remaining profitable and returning to a £1m turnover figure just two years following.

## Investing in our people

Investing in the training and development of our people has long been a tradition at JN Bentley.

In Yorkshire, a dedicated training school was built, similar to the training centre and outdoor space used in Skipton today. This provided an area where apprentices could hone their practical skills such as pipe laying and kerbing, learning from experienced colleagues and trainers on site.



Close collaboration with Keighly College resulted in the creation of a bespoke engineering apprenticeship, built around our culture and practices. Maintaining links with education providers, and offering apprenticeships, placements and graduate roles remains an integral part of our early careers approach today.



**2000**

Derived from our commercial building expertise, we've delivered a number of projects for aerospace clients, including Leeds Bradford Airport and Multiflight. In 2000 we carried out an apron extension in front of the terminal building and our team had front row seats to watch Concorde's last ever flight into the airport.

Anglian Water was added to our portfolio of clients in the 2000s following the award of the significant Wing Pipeline - a 41km cross-country project that involved a number of major crossings. Success at Wing helped us to secure further pipeline schemes such as Covenham to Boston and most recently, a place on the Strategic Pipeline Alliance.



**2001**

2001: Clay lining a new area prior to landfilling at Skibeden just outside Skipton.

We started working for Yorwaste, a North Yorkshire waste management company, designing and building extensions to landfill sites and associated infrastructure for environmental management. In those days, very little of our domestic rubbish was recycled!

**2005**

Our contract with Yorwaste was an effective springboard that led to much bigger framework contracts in 2005 with Waste Recycling Group and SITA doing similar work across the whole of the north of England.



**2008**

We launched our first Health & Safety Strategy which included the introduction of the 10 Golden Rules - they remain a fundamental part of our strategy. Since then we have developed a suite of Operational Safety and Environmental Standards which set the standards we expect when it comes to safety and environmental compliance.



2000: Construction along the Wing Pipeline.

# 2000s

The 2000s saw the biggest period of growth for the business over two decades. Employee numbers grew by 221% - from 174 in 2000 to 560 in 2010 - and turnover reached a record level, increasing from £18m at the start of the decade, to £83m by 2010. We also underwent geographical expansion and opened offices in Durham in 2005 and Shifnal in 2009, following major framework wins.

Although we had been working for Yorkshire Water for a number of years, MMB winning its AMP3 design and build waste-water north area framework in 2000 was the start of a new chapter in our history.

Co-locating Mott MacDonald designers, JN Bentley construction staff and client staff from Yorkshire Water at our offices in Skipton was a first for our industry. That team subsequently moved on to Yorkshire Water's Buttershaw depot in Bradford, followed by Livingstone House in Leeds and finally Bank House in Leeds, where we are today.



2005: We opened an office in Durham.



2009: We opened an office in Shifnal, Shropshire, co-locating with the Client, Severn Trent, and other supply chain partners.

2014: Our partnership with Mott MacDonald saw JN Bentley Ltd join the Mott MacDonald Group in 2014 after a successful 15 year relationship, during which we delivered over £1 billion worth of work for clients in the water sector and beyond.

Employee numbers and turnover grew significantly again between 2010 and 2020 - and in 2018 we hit a key milestone, delivering £300m in turnover in a single year.

# 2010s

2013

Our second joint venture – JBA Bentley – was incorporated in 2013 and successfully bid and won the major Water & Environment Management framework for the Environment Agency. We opened offices at Clarence Dock in Leeds and then Peterborough, becoming a valued and trusted supplier to the EA, delivering flood defence projects. Flagship schemes included the Foss Barrier in York and our current quay refurbishment works at Great Yarmouth.

2014

Our teams in Wales and Peterborough grew significantly following framework award successes with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and the Environment Agency. After being named one of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's capital delivery partners, tasked with delivering their AMP6 Capital Programme as part of an 'Alliance' arrangement, our team set-up camp in new co-located offices in Newport, South Wales.

New office space in Peterborough was also opened to accommodate our growing JBA Bentley team delivering projects across the country for the Environment Agency.

2015

2015: Co-located offices in Newport, Wales.



2015: At the Foss Barrier in York we delivered a temporary solution to improve flood protection following significant flooding in 2015, before implementing permanent works to increase pumping capacity by 55%.



2019

We recorded our lowest ever All Injury Frequency Rate (AIFR) since the launch of our Health & Safety Strategy in 2008. We also began work on our I Care programme and introduced the concept of Beyond Zero. This has seen the roll-out of behavioural safety training for colleagues and the launch of our Beyond Zero safety campaigns: Hands Clear?, Service Avoidance (Plan it, Prove it, Protect it) and Supporting Ankles.



2022: Red Zone (Thumbs Up) training led by our QES Team.

2020



2020 signalled a new era for the business as we formed a new 'Region' within Mott MacDonald Group, MMBC. This prompted increased integration between JN Bentley and Mott MacDonald colleagues: the healthy contractor/consultant tension continuing to help us perform at our best.

2021

Thames Water made an appearance on our order book for the first time as we picked up three new frameworks with the UK's largest water and wastewater company.

Maintaining our reputation in the water industry saw us secure AMP7 frameworks with all existing water clients too.



2021: We moved into a co-located office in Reading to deliver our frameworks with Thames Water.



# Looking to the future

with Paul Bentley, Managing Director, JN Bentley.

## Workload and future growth

History has shown that we have good people, delivering important projects for clients with whom we have built long lasting relationships. This will continue beyond 2022 as our focus shifts to AMP8 and framework renewals with several of our existing water sector clients. Focusing on our existing clients remains as important as ever, and with that should come an increasing amount of work, particularly in those newer areas such as Thames Water.

Outside of the water sector, we remain proactive in identifying and pursuing other opportunities, both for growth with clients who we are already engaged with on a smaller scale, such as The National Trust, Magnox and P&G and others with the potential for new types of work in areas such as coastal defence, the hydrogen industry, other forms of renewables, highways and UK defence.

The new frameworks recently awarded with the Canal and River Trust, Associated British Ports and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (direct civils), are three examples where we have a significant opportunity to grow our presence.



2021: A project delivered for Cadent Gas to carry out improvement works to cover and protect a vulnerable section of a high-pressure pipeline.

## Digital transformation

Our digital transformation has continued at pace over the last few years and shows no signs of slowing down. Digital rehearsals, BIM 360, digitised inspection and testing and production delivery using our industry-leading component library – Moata Intelligent Content – is becoming the norm across the design and build of our projects.

Virtual (VR), augmented (AR) and mixed reality may in fact become the reality on many schemes, bringing designs to life and allowing us to plan construction more effectively. Artificial Intelligence (AI) could help us to write risk assessments and predict risks, driving our health and safety commitment of zero.



Plant will start to become more autonomous and incorporate features that reduce health and safety risk. We already see this in Intelligent Machine Control (IMC) – a feature on a number of machines on our fleet – which utilises a 3D design model and helps to improve operational accuracy. Auto-stop control, auto-grade assist, auto-tilt control, minimum distance control and bucket angle hold all mean the operator can safely rely on the system without worrying about digging too deep or damaging the surface.



## Sustainability and carbon

In 2021, we made a commitment to be Net Zero by 2040. Achieving this will require a collective effort across the business.

We have already made good progress; we are now certified as a carbon neutral business – one of the very first organisations in the sector – after meeting the internationally recognised PAS 2060, externally accredited by the Carbon Trust. Whilst we achieved this through offsetting, in the future we intend to reduce what we offset by reducing our footprint through alternative, innovative means – such as being operationally ‘green’ and by developing low carbon solutions for our clients.

All electricity used within our offices has been moved to green tariffs and progress is being made towards electrifying our car and van fleet, using sustainable biofuels and optimising generators for site welfare set-ups.



Solar smart site set-up.

We are already seeing sites reap the carbon and cost saving benefits of a ‘smart solar’ set-up, which uses solar technology alongside a traditional generator to significantly reduce the amount of fossil fuel used.



2021: Our flood protection scheme at South Ferriby received an ‘Environmental Best Practice’ Green Apple Award, recognised as a low carbon environmental project.

## Health and safety

Great health and safety performance is a team effort. It is only by working as a team that we will deliver our strategy and achieve our commitment of zero injuries and preventing occupational ill health.

Our I Care programme has played a big part in contributing to improved health and safety performance over the last few years - and it is the commitment of our colleagues to make safe choices that is signalling a change towards positive behavioural safety.

Looking beyond 2022 our focus will remain on our commitment to zero; our goal is to work in a safe place ‘Beyond Zero’ where we talk about the ‘what ifs’ and plan for the unplanned. It is by making time for these ‘Talk Safe’ conversations that we will make sure we stay safe even when an unplanned event happens.

## Paul.

Managing Director,  
JN Bentley.



# Closing remarks from James Harris

## James Harris marks JN Bentley's 50th anniversary



Warm congratulations to everyone at JN Bentley on your 50th anniversary. It is a fantastic organisation and one I was lucky enough to spend ten years working very closely within our MMB joint venture. My decade in MMB taught me a huge amount and showed me that it is possible to work hard and still have lots of fun

– something we should all strive for. It also highlighted how 'team' is everything and the importance of celebrating success together, not necessarily as individuals.

Why do I think JN Bentley has stood the test of time? At its heart are its people. Really great people. It has a long history of attracting and retaining high quality colleagues and its directly employed operating model means that every penny invested in its people is an investment in JN Bentley's future.

Its approach to finding new clients sets it apart. JN Bentley looks for clients with whom it can build long-term relationships, based on the ability to add value to their business. Perhaps that's why its list of clients is so stable, with many enduring relationships spanning years and years.

The packaging of design and construction services into a single entity – MMB (and later JBA Bentley) – has been hugely successful. For me there are three simple attributes that combine to make MMB unique: its commercial model, its operating model, and its culture - combining the very best of contracting and design under single leadership.

JN Bentley continues to have a positive influence on the wider Mott MacDonald, especially since it joined the Group in 2014 and then through the formation of our MMBC region in 2020. Its expertise in safety has transformed MM, especially the behavioural aspects of safety. From what we have learned from working alongside JN Bentley means we are better at working with contractors elsewhere. The positive impact you see from the rotation of MM colleagues into JN Bentley (and vice versa) is hugely satisfying. The benefits are wide ranging, but this diversity of voice, thought and experience certainly means we make better decisions.

JN Bentley has fundamentally changed Mott MacDonald for the better and I look forward to further supporting its growth and development into the future.

Congratulations, JN Bentley!

## James.

Executive Chair, Mott MacDonald.

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It has a long history of attracting and retaining high quality colleagues and its directly employed operating model means that every penny invested in its people is an investment in JN Bentley's future.

James Harris,  
Executive Chair, Mott MacDonald.



**Bentley** 

**MMB**  
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