

Inside Data Centre Podcast.

WITH ANDY DAVIS

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Title

Graham Harle and Steve Kelly, Gleeds: Delivering the Data Centres of Tomorrow

Date

5th July 2024

Transcript

This is the Inside Data Centre podcast. We talk to the people who power the data centre sector to give you insider info on everything happening in DC today. Here's your host, Andy Davis.

Andy Davis (0:29 - 1:02)

Welcome to the Inside Data Centre podcast. Today, I'm joined by Graham Harle, CEO and Steve Kelly, Global Director, Data Centres and Mission Critical of GLEEDS. Good morning, both.

Thank you both for coming on. Obviously, looking forward to talking about GLEEDS and data centres. You know, that's what we're here for, but also to hear a little bit more about both of you and your journey into the industry.

Before we go into all of that, just give the listeners a quick introduction of who you are and what your role is. Graham, should we start with you?

Graham Harle (1:02 - 1:16)

Yeah, thanks. Yeah, so Graham Harle, I'm the Global CEO of GLEEDS. I've been at GLEEDS 29 years.

So more or less man and boy in the business and yeah, fantastic business to work in. Steve?

Steve Kelly (1:17 - 1:25)

So I'm Steve Kelly. I'm the Global Sector Lead for GLEEDS. I've been in GLEEDS, you know, four years right now and love every minute of it, to be fair.

Andy Davis (1:26 - 2:00)

Yeah, and as we were saying before we come on, very busy times for GLEEDS right now and for all of us, but we'll go into that shortly when we cover off what you're up to. Always interesting to hear how you started your career and how you developed to where you are in the industry. Obviously, the reason for the podcast was largely to try and attract more people to the world of data centres.

So it's good to hear how those in it sort of carried their journey through. So Graham, you mentioned you've been with GLEEDS 29 years, which obviously is a long time for anyone in any career, but how did you start your career and how did you progress to where you are today?

Graham Harle (2:00 - 3:40)

Yeah, so I started my career 35 years ago, which seems an incredibly long time ago now. And I fell into quantity surveying as it was at the time, or still is, just by chance. To be honest, I finished my school with my A-levels and I wasn't that keen on going to full-time education because I was playing football at the time as well.

So, but I wanted to do a degree. So I just looked at apprenticeship programs at the time and fell into quantity surveying, worked for a small little business in the West End of London and thoroughly enjoyed it. I love being outside.

I love being mobile, I love traveling. So for me, and I love economics, so it ticked all the boxes for me. And I'm so glad I made that decision because in my 35 years, I've had the privilege of working with some amazing people in our business, wonderful clients and consultants around the world, delivering amazing projects.

You know, I still get incredibly excited and passionate about our industry and the sector. And the big thing for me is always around what we do to contribute to communities and society as a whole. So, and interestingly, 1989, 1990, when I came into the industry, one of my first projects I worked on as a trainee was a data centre for a financial institution down in Bristol.

So I had immediate exposure to the sector.

Andy Davis (3:41 - 4:04)

And it always makes me laugh when you talk to a lot of people now and they think data centres are a new thing. And then when you have these conversations, you realise that they've obviously been around for a while, but they've also been part of the industry for a while. It's just that now the exposure is huge and obviously the importance has changed, et cetera, et cetera.

And Steve, yourself, how did you start your career and how did you end up in the world of data centres?

Steve Kelly (4:05 - 5:30)

I thought I was going to be a history teacher at first when I came out of school, to be honest. My uncle who works for a big contractor said, why don't you get into, you know, quantity surveying, which I'd never heard of. I'm a bit like Graham, tick a lot of boxes what I was interested in, both career-wise and where I wanted to go.

So I studied in Liverpool as a QS and I started off my journey as a graduate QS in Liverpool. And for reasons that will probably take longer in this podcast to explain, I moved abroad when I was roughly around about 23 and spent around 11 years working across, you know, the whole of Eastern Europe and the Middle East and places like that, you know, diverse range of different projects, I suppose, stadia, industrial offices. And, you know, funny as Graham says there, did a lot of banks that, you know, had their own IT rooms and servers.

And, you know, the early days of, I suppose, the initial kind of data centres in a way. And then around about 2016, I decided to return a bit closer into Western Europe. And I was looking for roles and it wasn't really specific in terms of sector.

And a data centre project lead, you know, QS role came up in the Netherlands. And at that point, to be honest, I had very little understanding of the data centre sector. You know, with everything in this sector, you know, it was fast.

It was really, you know, interesting. It was a great learning curve. You know, it was continual change.

It was challenging. And it still is, to be fair. I'm still learning.

And that's kind of in a very, you know, short nutshell. I went, you know, to being into data centres roughly just about 10 years ago.

Andy Davis (5:31 - 5:49)

It's one of those industries, isn't it? Where you always have to learn because it changes every few hours. I think I haven't released a podcast for a month.

This is the first one I'll have released for a month, which is my biggest gap. And I was thinking earlier today that probably you could probably do a podcast on everything that's happened in that one month and people would be surprised.

Graham Harle (5:49 - 5:50)

Yeah, yeah.

Andy Davis (5:52 - 6:24)

Interesting stories of how you both got in. Obviously one from the graduate route, one from the apprentice route, which is always, again, you know, fascinating to hear how people ended up in the sector. I think on the apprentice side, Graham, I'd be quite interested to hear your views on this.

We work with the UTC, an apprenticeship scheme. And one of their biggest challenges is kind of sharing the career path that it can create. That it's not, you know, it's not just an apprenticeship.

It's what it leads to. So what would your advice be to somebody that maybe is in that sort of apprentice route or looking to enter it, on how they can progress to where you've progressed today?

Graham Harle (6:25 - 7:56)

Well, one thing, you know, in our industry, UK, Europe in particular, you know, there's a lack of people coming into the construction and real estate sector. So, you know, we're constantly trying to attract young people into our business. You know, every year we take on a huge number of graduates and apprentices.

And we are, you know, I'm very passionate about apprenticeship programmes, certainly with the cost of university fees these days as well. And obviously with the government incentive of the apprenticeship levy. So we as a business, and I know many of our competitors and the contractors are really strong advocates of attracting young people on apprenticeship programmes.

Because, you know, there's a lot of people retiring from our industry in the near future. So there's certainly a lack of supply. I think the other big thing for me in terms of like my career path as well, we're talking about ticking all the boxes.

But I mentioned I love economics. So that's obviously a massive part of what we do as quantity surveyors in particular or cost managers. But also for me, you know, I was passionate about travelling.

And it really, as Steve was saying, you know, classic example there. If you come into our industry, the potential to work abroad is amazing. And I'd strongly advocate anyone that comes into our industry to give working abroad a go, because it is fantastic.

Andy Davis (7:57 - 8:08)

Yeah, I totally agree. I think travel is a massive benefit for this sector. And I guess that brings us on to you, Steve.

A living, breathing example of somebody that's experienced all that and lives where you are today.

Steve Kelly (8:09 - 9:06)

Yeah, I absolutely love airports myself. But no, to be honest, I mean, everyone's unique in how they want to grow. And that's the thing that I think is really, really important.

For me, having been abroad for 20 years, the different cultures, the different approaches to project delivery. And it fits really, really well with this sector. And it fits really well for me with Gleeds because our global reach, but our local experience has really helped us in this sector to expand.

And I think, you know, from my career, we look at the clients that we work for, we look at their global reach as well. You know, you can go wherever you want to go. You can take your career wherever you want to take it with Gleeds, but also within this sector.

And to me, there's no limits. And this sector is all about connectivity and, you know, growing and, you know, changing how we work and how we live. So for me, when you kind of come across and do what I do as a QS, if you like to be mobile, if you like to be in a fast-paced industry, data centres is going to give you that that real good basis, to be honest.

Andy Davis (9:07 - 9:57)

Yeah, and I think we've become much better at selling that story as well. The industry was notoriously bad for years because it was trying to be too much of a secret. And nobody really knew that all those benefits existed within the industry.

I think you could argue this happened out of necessity rather than a strategy, but it's definitely now a sector that's positioned in a way that people that are maybe younger and in the industry are actually saying, I'd like to work in data centres. How do I become a data centre cost manager or project manager, which just never happened before the last year or two. Yeah.

And that brings us on to GLEEDS. You mentioned a few times there, Steve, obviously, a large organisation, a lot of localities, a lot of regions where you're operating in. Graham, do you want to give an overview of GLEEDS and where you are today and what your offerings are?

Graham Harle (9:57 - 11:28)

Yeah, sure. So our business, we're 139 years old this year. So been around for a long time.

We're turning over close to 300 million in revenue globally out nearly 80 offices in 25 countries, and we're employing around about 3000 people at present. I mean, our global footprint and our independence are extremely important to us and interestingly to our clients when we get the feedback from our clients. And our services, we're focused on cost and commercial management, program and project management, asset management and advisory services in the real estate sector.

And one thing we continue to invest and embed at the moment is our digital products. And at the ESG agenda, we continue to invest and embed those products into our core services. So yeah, great business.

One thing I'm really proud of is that we continue to be recognised as a great place to work and that's just been renewed again. So very proud of that. But we're also being recognised as a great place to work for mental health and wellbeing and in particular career development.

And that picks up on the point we were talking earlier about bringing graduates and apprentices into our business. And we're being recognised as a great place to work from that perspective. So yeah, great business.

Really proud to work here.

Andy Davis (11:29 - 11:34)

And you must've seen a lot of changes in your 29 years across the business.

Graham Harle (11:34 - 12:12)

Yeah, I mean, it's, you know, the biggest change obviously is we've gone, we are global. When I joined 29 years ago, I think we had two offices overseas, Paris and in Braunschweig, just outside Berlin in Germany. And then, you know, we've continued to grow overseas.

I was in 2007, I opened up our business in Egypt. So big office in Cairo now over 120 people. Really proud to be involved with establishing that business there.

But yeah, I mean, it's truly a global business now.

Andy Davis (12:13 - 12:34)

Yeah, definitely. And obviously that ties in with the data centre sector as well. And I know that's one of your strengths within the industry is that locality or say the geography that you guys can cover.

But yeah, when did you first move into the data centre sector? And obviously, how has it evolved over that period? That might be one for you, Steve or Graham, or you can both answer that one.

Graham Harle (12:34 - 13:18)

Yeah, I think, you know, as GLEEDS, I mean, we've been involved in the data centre market for over 30 years. And certainly in my time at GLEEDS, we've always had data centre projects around the world, mainly UK and Europe, to be honest. And we had some data centre experts, particularly down in our Southampton office.

And we tended to work for the financial institutions and the IT companies. But we've really focused on growing that business during the last five years and bringing Steve and some other people around. Steve into our business has really been the catalyst for substantial growth for us in that sector.

Steve Kelly (13:21 - 15:53)

Yeah, I mean, to build on that, I think businesses look at things normally, you know, in five-year plans and things. If I look at our DC business, it's gone from small to strength. You know, both in terms of our geographical, you know, spread of projects, but also our service offerings.

We work, you know, with big hyperscalers, you know, cloud providers, co-location providers, edge DCs. You know, and I look at our portfolio that spans all the way from the Americas, EMEA to APAC. And, you know, as Graham mentioned earlier on, you know, a lot of our core traditional services were still very, very strong.

And we are building that within data centres. But on top of that, things such as scheduling, energy procurement, health and safety, commissioning management, are really now strong offerings for us within this sector. And for me personally, in terms of growth, I mean, it's a testament to the people we have in this business.

It's not down to me, it's down to our teams. It's down to their knowledge, you know, people we have with the local presence within

the market. And Andy, you mentioned that earlier.

You know, for me, one of the big things that, you know, attracted me to GLEEDS is, you know, you can walk around the world and you can walk into a GLEEDS office. You can see real people that know the markets that they're in. We're not just PO boxes or shell entities.

You know, we're there in our markets with that experience. And data centres, I suppose, the future for me of construction delivery of data centres is the local teams, utilising that kind of local market experience and best practice that we can give them from a data centre side to help our clients do that. And, you know, Spain, you know, Graham, you mentioned some international businesses.

Spain's a great example for me where we've got numerous data centre projects that are delivered pretty much entirely by our Spanish and Iberian, you know, staff with their local knowledge allied to our sector knowledge. And we've been in Spain, Graham, correct me if I'm wrong, for probably around about 20 or 30 years. And, you know, that together is helping us meet, you know, our clients, you know, demands.

And this sector has resource issues. I mean, Andy, you've probably heard this many, many times in terms of how we need to get people in. And it's not going to be solved by flying people in and out.

It's solved by us training our staff locally to deliver the standards, you know, I suppose our clients expect. And this year we launched our DC training program globally. I think, you know, already possibly off the top of my head, around 150 people have completed that.

You know, that was established by, you know, Kurt Luby, who's our director for EMEA and LATAM. You know, it's a testament to how we're investing in our people, not just to bring from externally, but grow internally to meet our clients needs. And the sector's really, really, you know, it's buoyant for us and it's strong in terms of how we're delivering it.

Andy Davis (15:55 - 17:08)

Yeah, geography is an interesting one. I think what you've seen over the last two, three years is that massive growth into new geographies, which brings with it various challenges from delivering the facilities, from construction, from management, everything that comes with it. You've got that and you've also got the ESG sustainability push, which is pushing towards local supply chains, local talent, etc.

And when I'm talking to, whether it's a GC, a consultant or a client, it's very much, we really would like local. It's just it's not always there. So what you're doing from a training perspective is really important for you, but also for the industry, because you're able to upskill those local talent using the experience you've got across the business.

Yeah, exactly. And one question, again, that a lot of people ask me is about if you're coming into this industry, it is seen as a bit of a secret science by some people. And is it that much different from other real estate or is it really as difficult as it looks like it is?

I don't think we actually make it out to be difficult, but it does look difficult. What's your views on that, Graham? Do you think data centres is different and how does it differ to other real estate?

Graham Harle (17:08 - 18:28)

Yeah, I think, you know, there is like you say, there's a perception in the market that it's a sector that is unique and different from others. But I don't think it is completely. There are some key factors and Steve can build on this in a minute.

But, you know, it's getting, it's the speed of the construction. It's, you know, the clients we've got, it's all about, they have to get it to market. The demand is obviously clearly there.

And it's just, you know, it's really, it's the speed and getting these facilities built. So that area is for me is one of the biggest that, you know, we see. And I think, you know, for me, there are solutions out there in terms of prefabrication, modularisation.

And Steve and I, when we were on a site last week and a data centre project and first phase of many, and we've just, that was one of the key topics of discussion. It's like, how can we get prefabrication and modularisation embedded into the early stages of design to speed up the construction phase? So that's one key area that I think is a different to like other sectors within construction real estate.

Steve Kelly (18:30 - 19:53)

I mean, I very much agree, you know, time to market, you know, getting power on dates, you know, ensuring that our clients, you know, who have tenants coming in can meet the requirements that they have within the timely fashion. I think how it differs from other sectors, and I've worked in many, many other sectors.

It's, and sectors change in terms of things, but the demand right now within data centres and the global demand for it. I mean, you can look, you know, the biggest data centre market in the world in the United States and the demand there is massive. But then you go over to APAC and you look in, you know, even Thailand or in Malaysia, where you wouldn't necessarily have the top of your head as a DC market just yet.

The demand is ramping up and ramping up and ramping up. And compared to possibly other sectors due to that speed, one of the things we need to be really agile to, and this is also comes into, you know, how we train our people, how we acquire talent is how do we meet that demand? And it's not just consultants, it's contractors, it's clients.

It's the whole supply chain right now, which needs to be geared up. And I think that really makes it stand out from other sectors in terms of its demand. Other sectors may have 10 year lifespans where projects last for 10 years and they can be quite slow burn and data centres are really, really not.

They're there, they start and they happen. You know, if we get appointed on a Monday, we'll start on a Tuesday and it goes.

Andy Davis (19:55 - 20:20)

And one point that builds on that as well, I think is what I'm seeing more now as collaborations, a collaboration between, whether it's between customers and consultants or consultants and GCs or other consultants and consultants, it doesn't matter. But to meet the demand, there has to be a level of collaboration because there is more than enough for everyone and equally, there's too much for any individuals to deliver all of this. So you're seeing more of that now.

Steve Kelly (20:22 - 21:03)

In terms of collaboration, yes. I think this market is so big and vast and it's not slowing down anytime soon. Right to your point, Andy, you know, we need to start looking at this sometimes not in terms of competition.

We have competitors, but also we're all trying to get to the same goals, our clients, and not one individual company that I know of anyway can meet that demand everywhere. So, you know, there needs to be more knowledge sharing. There needs to be more partnering up because we learn from our clients, we learn from our competitors, they learn from us.

But ultimately, we're all in the same industry to deliver something that if we can do it together and look how we can collaborate more, I think it's really, really important.

Andy Davis (21:05 - 21:30)

And Graham, on the sort of overarching view as well, it's always interesting when you're in a role where you're doing other sectors as well as data centres. Because I think one thing the industry has never been that good at is learning from other industries. Again, getting much better now, it's opened up a little bit.

But have you seen any ways you think the data centre industry could learn from other sectors you're involved with? Or have you seen examples of that happening?

Graham Harle (21:31 - 22:49)

Yeah, I mean, again, referring to a discussion we had with clients last week, you know, it's the sustainability agenda in particular that we really feel needs, we can help our clients on and actually get in these buildings to dealing with their carbon footprint, but also dealing with kind of LEED and BREEAM issues as well. And yeah, there was one particular example we talked about last week in terms of cooling options for the data centres, which is also always a massive issue. And the project we were walking around last week, they've come up with an innovative solution on that, which uses seawater cooling.

And we're doing that in, say, nuclear programs or in heavy industry. So there are solutions out there in other sectors that I think will greatly help the data centre sector in terms of dealing with the sustainability issues. Also, as a business, we're heavily involved in clean energy solutions.

So wind farms and solar farms. And again, you know, we're looking at some ways that we as a business and Steve and his team can really help bring some of those, some of that experience into the data centre sector.

Andy Davis (22:51 - 22:56)

Steve, have you started to see more of it happening now since you first entered this industry?

Steve Kelly (22:57 - 24:45)

Yeah, I mean, I think in terms of, you know, the requirements that we have and you said at the very beginning, you know, this sector changes on a weekly basis. Yeah, and it does. It's incumbent on us as consultants to actually be as ahead of that as we can to advise our clients.

Sustainability incredibly important. And I think how we work and advise our clients, you know, there's a lot of things in terms of data centres that we've seen over the years, which are actually negative. One of the things I think we should shout about more and more and more is the amount of stuff I see our clients doing within sustainability, within community engagement and the investments that they're making to actually be sustainable, to actually make the world in terms of, you know, a better place in terms of that.

I think data centres and also consultants can help a lot more in building that profile to actually say that DCs are not just big, energy-hungry things that consume. They actually give back a lot. And we're looking at district heating that we're doing in certain schemes in the Netherlands and in the Nordics.

Graham mentioned, you know, the seawater cooling in Spain. We're looking at using water to re-irrigate land and give it back to farmers and things like that. There's a lot of positive things we're doing in sustainability.

Yes, we have to tackle and we can use examples from other sectors, energy is one of our big sectors and I spend a lot of time talking to them to get innovative stuff. Graham mentioned nuclear and things like that, infrastructure as well. And I think, you know, for us, the energy thing is what we need to tackle as well and how we get to a sustainable point.

For example, generators. You know, I know a lot of people are looking at DCs without generators right now, but I'm still yet to find what that solution or hear what the actual solution is. But people are thinking about it and there are people tasked, there are better

engineers than I am, I'm a QS by background, you know, to look at their problems.

Andy Davis (24:46 - 25:09)

Yeah, definitely. And there's a reason why you're seeing a lot of renewable organisations, major global organisations now looking at the data centre industry. I think that tells you where the industry is going.

It's just the case of when and where. Finally on GLEEDS, before we move on, what's next? You're obviously very busy at the moment.

You're always building, but what's happening next?

Graham Harle (25:10 - 26:18)

Well, from a data centre sector specific area, we are focused on continuing to work with our wonderful clients, delivering their programmes globally. We're focused on attracting the best talent in the market, which is, we all know, is a major challenge. But as Steve mentioned earlier, we've also developed our own internal training programmes and bringing youngsters through.

We've got mentoring programmes, training programmes. So we're very focused on developing the best talent. And you can see that from the results, great place to work for career development, et cetera.

So we've got to develop the best talent internally and they've got great mentors in Steve and his team, great experience. So we're very focused on that and delivering the projects for our clients and really adding value from what we're seeing in other sectors. So, you know, for us, we're incredibly excited to be in the sector and the work we're doing at the moment and delivering is fantastic.

Andy Davis (26:20 - 26:40)

Yeah, and I think the development piece just touching it's really important for retention as well. I think a lot of organisations look at attraction. How can we get people to join the organisation?

But then they don't focus on the on retention. So what you're doing, it obviously helps from an attraction piece, but it also means you keep and develop the best talent in the industry as well.

Graham Harle (26:40 - 27:07)

Hundred percent. And, you know, the retention and development piece is, you know, we've got a great people and people development team here who are doing fantastic work in all of those areas. And, you know, I'm really proud when I see someone like Kurt, who's come in and developed all the way through his career and he's now a regional director.

And so I'm really proud of the work we do in that area.

Steve Kelly (27:09 - 27:50)

And I think just to add to that, I mean, within this sector, you know, we're having you've got people like Graham to do that, but you've also we're also having country sector leads now. I'm very much for empowering people to take control of the sectors that we have in their own regions and in their own countries. And we're finding that it's not just engagement in how the industry is going in data centres, how construction is going, but also for them to learn more.

They can make decisions. I'm not here to be sitting, telling people what to do. I'm there to empower people.

And the more we can empower people in this industry, the more people feel that they can contribute. I think it's really, really important. And that's where growth comes.

It comes from empowerment. Yeah.

Graham Harle (27:50 - 28:21)

And I mean, I had the privilege of being with our, you know, team in data centre sector team in Lisbon last week, and they are exceptional. They are exceptional people, the talent, what they're doing and the innovation. One thing I've mentioned earlier about modular prefabrication is BIM.

I mean, you're really driving the BIM agenda and the team in terms of what they're delivering from a BIM perspective is fantastic.

Andy Davis (28:24 - 28:50)

Excellent, and obviously Gleeds is a lot happening, a lot going on. And I say, I know you're doing great work and you've got some great people. So you're obviously doing something, something very well.

Before we close up, and I'll let you get on your Friday, just a couple of more quickfire questions. We've covered quite a lot of challenges this industry faces already. But do you have any particular challenges that you think will be the main ones for this sector as we head into the second half of 2024?

Steve Kelly (28:52 - 29:59)

From my point of view, there's numerous, but the three main ones from different angles, I think we talked quite a bit on resource and that's just resource in terms of people. I think that's resource in terms of the whole supply chain and data centres will continue to consume a huge amount of supply chain and that's going to grow. We need to understand how we address that, whether that's with the manufacturers, whether that's with, as Graham said, more prefab solutions, which have been going on.

The other one is energy. And again, we touched on it briefly, but working in new locations, understanding how we can work with national grids, national providers and engaging a lot more upstream with our clients and supporting our clients on that in terms of energy management and energy procurement. I think that's a big challenge and that will continue to be a challenge to be addressed in 2024.

It's going to continue for a while. And I think the third one, and I slightly talked about it earlier on, is, you know, community engagement and getting people on site. And I think data centres is getting better at being more transparent.

I think, you know, some of our clients should be coming more out instead of it being a secretive thing. We're building this, we're giving back to the communities, we're creating jobs, we're, you know, heat energy back into these things and reducing bills and really showing it as a force for good and that's something we do quite a lot with our clients at certain locations now is to build that profile. I think that's a challenge to send to perception because once perception has completely changed the sky's the limit or probably data centres will be in space by then but anyway.

Andy Davis

Funny you should say that, there's an article in my newsletter today 28th of June we're recording this about the EU discussing data centres in space. I know it's been talked about again but I found an article earlier so yeah it's still on the agenda whether it'll ever happen in our lifetime we shall see.

Steve Kelly

Can I be the sec to leave for Gledes Galactic then at that point? You heard it here first.

Graham Harle

It'll be part of your career development plan Steve.

Steve Kelly

That's fine I can hand data centres to Kurt and I'll take the galactic role.

Andy Davis

There's a few jokes in there about sending people to space but I think we'll leave it, we'll leave it there. Graham anything else you'd like to add on the challenges? I know again you've covered quite a lot in the conversation already.

Graham Harle

No I just I'm with Steve you know in terms of the challenges it's going to be a resource one you know you look at the exponential growth in the use of digital AI etc you know it's almost like where is this industry going to go you know how big is it? I was with someone at the weekend who lays fibre optic cables across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans and I look at what they're doing and developing and you kind of think wow there's just going to be so much more data flows on these fibre optic cables and so I just see exponential growth in the sector so we've got to as an industry because there's a finite amount of resource we've got to develop new and better technologies to build these data centres so that for me is the biggest challenge.

Andy Davis

Yeah definitely and we've got half an hour in before we mentioned AI which I think is an actual record for the podcast so well done both of you for not bringing it up earlier. Two final questions before we close up if you could ask everyone in the sector to start or stop doing one thing what would it be?

Steve Kelly

I think from my point of view in terms of resource I'd stop putting hard requirements on you know people joining the sector you know I see so many times someone needs to have 10 years experience in data centres I didn't I had zero experience 10 years ago in data centres and you know this back to the thing with so many other sectors where you can replicate you know the same skill sets and if you have that skill set you can learn data centres like you can learn life sciences like you can learn nuclear and infrastructure and I think we need to stop that you know I think I suppose it's something we need to start doing is I always thought about this a universal set of acronyms because I'm getting tired of learning new ones every year and you know we can get that sorted and we can take the lead on that one.

Graham Harle

Yeah I'd agree with that Steve and I think the other thing for me Andy just building on that you know the hard requirements for people it's going back to what we were talking about earlier about the sector coming together to really help with the training and development of people and making it attractive to people and I think that's you know a key challenge and something the sector should start doing more.

Andy Davis

Yeah definitely and I think with that it's about marketing it and creating it to the target audience as well I think one thing we're not very good at is marketing towards that entry level generation which is part of the concept no plug for data centre club trying to link

it with fight club and make it a bit more of a you know an attractive proposition for people to understand that we're not all tech geniuses or engineering geniuses you know there's a wide variety of people in this industry so yeah both real good points. Final question if you could give one piece of advice to anyone looking to work in the sector what would it be?

Steve Kelly

I suppose my initial thing is 'be excited' you know for me and this is my own personal statement I think this is the fastest growing sector in construction globally you know you're working with household names people that you hear of on the tv all the time the products that you use and it's back to the original point I think we need to do more of this understand where this sector can take you in your career both in you know how you can develop you and also locationally you know we talked about one of our regional directors Kurt earlier on Kurt's been working with me since he graduated and now he's a regional director and for me if there's ever a story there to tell right he's a very good example of that and you know age isn't a barrier and you know if you've got if you're enthusiastic you know and you want to work in this industry I mean come and have a chat with Graham and Gleeds and me because we'd be happy to introduce you and promote it.

Graham Harle

Yeah again I'm just building on that you know what the one piece of advice I would give is what I said at the very start of this podcast about using it as a it's a fantastic sector use it as a real kind of springboard to launch your career, learn, and the most important thing travel because one thing we see in obviously the data centre sector is a lot of people that are very mobile globally and you can use it the sector once you've got that experience to to travel and see some wonderful places experience different cultures and I think that's you know it's great opportunity for people to to really see the world.

Andy Davis

Yeah 100% and it's interesting because in a conversation I was having yesterday around education and apprenticeships they were saying that their biggest challenge is retention within apprenticeships and my point was that's because they don't know where it can take you they just they see something a bright light over there and they aim for that bright light rather than the one that's actually ahead of them if they just can see people like both of you and like others in the industry that have been successful, developed careers and the travel the opportunity the growth so but that's on us I think to paint that picture. Yeah I agree.

Thanks both for your time really enjoyed that chat we could go into much more detail but obviously we won't it'll become more of a more of a documentary than a podcast but really appreciate it, where can people get hold of you if they want to talk to you learn more about Gleeds or you know anything that they'd like to ask?

Graham Harle

So to get a hold of me graham.harle at gleeds.com I'm also on LinkedIn as well so if you want to get in contact with me please do so.

Steve Kelly

Very much the same steve.kelly at gleeds.com also on LinkedIn you know through our website.

Andy Davis

Yeah we'll put the website in the show notes when we release it we won't put your emails in it just in case you get bombarded but we'll put we'll put the show notes in in the in the sorry we'll put the website in the show notes but thanks both for your time enjoy your weekends we'll catch up again in the future and obviously keep up the good work.

Graham Harle

Thanks Andy.

Steve Kelly

Thank you Andy.