

A day in the life of an NEC accredited Project Manager

Rudy Hughes
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Please introduce yourself including your background, role and company.

My name is Rudy Hughes, and I have been working within a project environment for over a decade in Defence, Health, Water and Construction. I currently work on a secondment as a Project Manager of construction (PMc) for United Utilities (UU).

What does your role involve?

Much of my time at UU has been allocated to building and/or upgrading a set of Water Treatment Works that had previously been decommissioned. This has required a technical coordination approach, utilising many of UU's different technical disciplines prior to handover. They teams are fantastic to work with, but managing the teams and understanding the critical path was initially quite challenging.

What does a typical day look like to you?

Typically, I spend most of my day onsite. It is important to collaboratively work through problems and risks and to also see, and support the work happening on the ground. Throughout the day I will respond to mass emails which are usually about stakeholder management.

What do you enjoy the most about your job?

Breaking a complex programme of works into simple stages, and pairing this with clear direction and instruction. This keeps the Project Team and Contractor motivated and focused. Simple is not easy.

// The Client's requirement stated I need to be accredited with NEC. This resulted in me being included in the next available NEC3: ECC Project Manager Accreditation course. //

How many NEC procured projects have you worked on?

Five contracts so far. The contracts include NEC3 ECC options A, C & E. The total combined value is in excess of £56 million. I am starting my 6th this month.

At what point in your career did you (or your organisation) decide to take the NEC accreditation course?

Upon joining Mott MacDonald in August 2018, I had an awareness of NEC and had completed the introduction to NEC course. However, the Client's requirement stated I need to be accredited with NEC. This resulted in me being included in the next available NEC3: ECC Project Manager Accreditation course.

What was the one takeaway from the course that you are using every day?

Read the contract. I have gained a lot of experience contractually in a short space of time. I often review the contract to identify what is applicable to a certain situation or how best to apply it. This has also aided to me challenge or support the activity.

What was the first NEC procured project that you worked on?

An NEC3: ECC Option E with a tier-two Contractor building an 'asset standard' borehole site for UU with a value of £6m. It had significant internal interest due to the Dry Weather Event from February 2018 onwards, which very nearly resulted in temporary water restrictions across the North West. The toughest part was defining 'asset standard' because each discipline had a different set of expectations and managing this was key. As there was no scope on the project, Option E proved to be a useful tool to react very quickly

to unforeseen change and risk. Likewise, the Contractor remained flexible throughout which allowed us to collaboratively deliver on time and on budget.

What was the most memorable NEC procured project that you worked on and why?

The Dry Weather Event Phase 1. I initially started with four sites and after a good start, the Client handed me a further eight sites which was the entirety of the borehole sites. It was my first NEC contract and my first programme with Mott MacDonald. I fully submerged myself into the projects and worked extremely closely with the Contractor; the benefit from this was ten-fold and it made an ideal working environment. It helped expose junior members of the team to the Works and had a positive effect in accelerating the programme. I sent people to Paris to purchase £250,000 worth of pipe. We had 24-hour monitoring on site when putting Water into Supply (WIS). There was a requirement to buy the same piece of equipment twice to see which would arrive the quickest and have a contingency plan in place. A team went to Norway for equipment and another to Los Angeles for something very bespoke. It was incredibly fast paced, dynamic, innovative and very rewarding.

What advice would you give somebody pursuing engineering as a career?

Join Mott MacDonald.

“ Read the contract. I often review the contract to identify what is applicable to a certain situation or how best to apply it. ”