

IBP AWARD ENTRY 2019 | BUILDING 'NEW' JOURNALIST | WILL ING

I was 21 years old when I joined Building on 9 July 2018, straight out of university. At the time I had never heard of many of the jobs in the industry, such as cost consulting and groundwork contracting, and knew nothing at all about procurement procedures, building regulations or problems managing interfaces.

Over the following months, however, I endeavoured to attend events, meet contacts and learn more about the many problems facing the industry. Reporting for Building has taken me from an industrial estate in Bristol to riverside terraces in Parliament, and from Chernobyl to the new Tottenham Hotspur stadium.

To date, I have written more than 500 news stories for Building, as well as ten 1,800-word features and other pieces of comment and analysis. More than 30 news stories have been about Interserve: I broke stories about new problems faced by the contractor last autumn, just as it struggled to service its debt load or finish problem jobs. I was also reporting from the room when Interserve's board pleaded with investors to vote through a rescue package – and covered the firm's descent into administration later that day, after the deal was blocked.

[Holding it all in: Containing radioactivity at Chernobyl](#)

While construction in Chernobyl was a ripe topic for a colourful feature, several obstacles had to be overcome. The first was getting enough material – in the one day I spent in Chernobyl – to be able to tell a new and compelling story about a place everybody has heard of. But the hardest challenge was the writing itself – shaping a narrative that did justice to the immense engineering difficulties, the bizarre history of the location and the human-interest side of what it is like to work in a nuclear disaster zone. The resulting piece is in the top three most-read features on Building's website in the past twelve months, having amassed over 5,000 reads. An average read-on-page time of just under six minutes suggests readers were sufficiently gripped by the first half of the feature to want to read on.

[Upset pandas see Interserve ditch the high-vis at Edinburgh zoo](#)

This story demonstrates how industry publications such as Building can deliver not only news people need, but also light-hearted stories they can enjoy reading and sharing. The tale was so compelling that it was picked up by The Sunday Times, which splashed it on its front page on Sunday 16 September 2018. Several other newspapers also picked up the story, including the Daily Mail and the Independent. The story had a curious second life when it was cited by government ministers in both the House of Commons and the Lords in the spring, as they defended giving the UK's third largest construction company more work in the run-up to it entering administration.

[Offsite: Could schools soon be built in a fortnight?](#)

Building's core mission is to provide insight into the construction market – particularly for consultants and staff at big contractors that buy the magazine. Those who work on schools can take their own view as to whether this technology will become standard and replace traditional construction methods in the sector. But this feature gives them an overview of the technical details of the system, as well as the support offered by the Department of Education, which will help them decide. Note: it was accompanied online and in the magazine by a news write-off, titled: [DfE outlines offsite building boom](#)'.

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