



Marshalls Urges Construction Industry to Disrupt & Dismantle Those Behind Modern Slavery

In Marshalls recently published 'End Modern Slavery Report 2018' Elaine Mitchel-Hill, the organisations' Business & Human Rights Lead has urged the construction sector to take decisive action against those exploiting modern day slaves.

Mitchel-Hill stated, "Business has a stark choice. It can act with immediacy to disrupt and dismantle the criminal organisation exploiting and abusing vulnerable individuals – men, women and children whether in forced labour, domestic servitude, being sexually exploited or a combination of these, and more besides – or it can stand by and see its own operations and existing commercial landscape disrupted and dismantled before its eyes by criminals whose ingenuity, adaptability, disregard and cruelty knows no bounds. They do not have to get 'sign off' from boards, develop complex strategies or sit in endless meetings before making the most of opportunities. They simply take them and in the process disrupt and dismantle your operations."

She continued, "According to a very recent report by the Chartered Institute of Building, Construction & the Modern Slavery Act: Tackling Exploitation in the UK*, many within the construction sector have done little or nothing in response to the Modern Slavery Act.

I honestly have to wonder why. Many bemoan the short comings of the Act saying it doesn't have teeth. We'll have to wait and see. But why wait for the Act to bear its teeth? Why not just do the right thing? For us the Modern Slavery Act has proved a massively powerful platform and driver for engaging and empowering people throughout our business operations, for starting new and challenging conversations with our suppliers, helping us to identify a new and fresh range of partners with which to collaborate, providing the push to have difficult conversations about complex issues with key stakeholders, and also to improve further our own business thinking in

response. It has added huge value to our business & human rights programme and in terms of added value it has also delivered commercial advantage.”

“I have heard reference in the last 12 months to the ‘corporate witness’ who pretty much knows modern slavery is in its operations and supply chains but thinks that if it doesn’t know for sure that it can’t be held accountable; the ‘corporate perpetrator’ who actively reaps the benefits from modern day slaves having decided that they will deal with ‘issues’ as they occur in fire-fighting mode; and finally the ‘corporate victim’, the organisation that is doing its utmost to combat modern slavery but is still, despite its best efforts, infiltrated by modern slavery. I know for sure into which camp Marshalls falls.”

Mitchel-Hill concluded by saying, “The extent of modern slavery in the UK shows little sign of stopping or slowing, but why would it when it is so attractive to traffickers to exploit people here. Although modern slavery is considered to be more prevalent in poorer nations, advanced economies provide lucrative incentives for traffickers. In Africa, the ILO estimates that a trafficked person may generate US\$3,900 in profits. In the Asia Pacific region, the annual profit per victim is \$5,000. But in wealthier nations such as the UK, each victim could generate \$34,800 a year.* It remains lucrative and prevalent and will do so until many, including the private sector act.”

“So, the construction sector, and business at large, must choose. Disrupt and dismantle, or take a seat and watch your business operations be disrupted and dismantled.”

You can read Marshalls ‘End Modern Slavery 2018 Report’ here:

<https://www.marshalls.co.uk/documents/reports/modern-slavery-report-2018.pdf>

ENDS

Source:

Editors Notes:

Marshalls Modern Slavery Statement: <https://www.marshalls.co.uk/documents/policies/modern-slavery-and-anti-human-trafficking-policy.pdf>

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Marshalls Modern Slavery Risk Mapping:

<https://www.marshalls.co.uk/documents/presentations/modern%20slavery%20country%20profiling%202018.pdf>

Marshalls Modern Slavery Report 2018:

<https://www.marshalls.co.uk/documents/reports/modern-slavery-report-2018.pdf>

Marshalls became a UNGC signatory in 2009 and a member of the UNGC UK Network later the same year. The organisation is required to report on its progress each year in Marshalls UNGC Communication on Progress Report (COP). You can view the most recent COP here:

<https://www.marshalls.co.uk/documents/reference/ungccopreport2017.pdf>

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