

Full speed ahead for 2013 as

By Richard Baker

Business Correspondent

IT WAS lucky 13 for the East Midlands Property & Business Show, as industry figures sounded an optimistic note about where the market is heading as 2013 looms. Hundreds of people from across the industry in the East Midlands attended the event, which was held for the 13th year on Friday at the East Midlands Conference Centre.

Martin Freeman, whose Business Shows Group organises the event, admitted that there were fewer stands this year than in 2011.

But he said: "You can see and feel a real buzz out there in the conference hall. Though we have taken a row out, people have been reinvesting in their exhibition display stands. And Capita, for example, are now talking about booking space at all three of the shows we do in the East Midlands.

"There are not as many shows like this in the UK and because of the impact of social media a lot more people outside the area are talking about it."

The annual event is one of the most significant dates on the industry's regional calendar, with inward investment organisations, construction companies, architects, civil engineers and other profession-



Meeting contacts: From left: Nick Gregory and Chris White from CPMG.

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als coming together to talk business.

Nicola Millward, of the engineering consultancy Millward, was among those suggesting 2013 could be a better year for the industry.

She said: "In 2011 there was no sense of people actually wanting to do anything - the work that there was more about pre-planning and site investigation. It wasn't design be-

cause people weren't building out. Now, people are on site and things are coming out of the ground.

"I'm really optimistic about 2013. A lot of the schemes we're being instructed on are in their early stages and will be starting on site next. The more we see on site the more it will encourage others - they will see work starting and they will follow.

"Six or seven years ago the telephone wouldn't stop ringing. Now you have got to make jobs happen. It's not just about engineering it's about being able to identify wider opportunities - if you see something for an architect it could turn into something for you. You have to trade with more than just the service you offer.

"That's what I've spent 18



Organiser: Martin Freeman

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months doing - creating relationships, working alongside different contractors or architects in ways where we are all looking out for one another, because that builds a sense of loyalty."

Steve Wooler, MD of the building, infrastructure and environmental consultancy BWB Consulting, has recently been spending time in Australia developing a joint ven-

ture. He explained why the firm continued to attend an event closer to home: "We've been coming here for 13 years because as far as we're concerned events like the East Midlands Property & Business Show are the business equivalent of speed dating.

"In the first hour that I was here I have seen eight people who it's been good for me to talk to and bumped into a num-

optimism grows for new year



Contact point: Matt Wrate from Couchperrywilkes

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ber of others. A lot of the value in events like this is in market intelligence, which I couldn't have picked up in such a concentrated period of time outside.

"We are dealing with some major projects nationally and internationally and there is a lot going on for us."

Richard Flisher, of the architects CPMG, also hinted at significant opportunities for

the business, adding: "The show feels a bit quieter than last year but, having said that, I've had a couple of really useful conversations that I might not have had if I hadn't been here. You also pick up on things which can lead to business in the future.

"In our business we are suddenly getting really busy, and we think there is a lot of opportunity – which is not the

way we viewed the market earlier in the year. The market has clearly been through a quiet period but from our perspective it is now picking up.

"The Priority School Building programme is now coming on stream, which is a significant opportunity for CPMG. We do a lot of work in that area and have some significant relationships, so it should be good for us."



On the spot: Ronnie Harris and Chris Holloway of BWB

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