

Laing O'Rourke founder to step down in leadership 2022 changes

November 25, 2021



Laing O'Rourke founder and majority shareholder Ray O'Rourke KBE is stepping down from the position of Group Chief Executive at the business.

The change will come into effect from September 2022.

The move has been announced almost 45 years since Ray started in business with his brother Des – working on a single £2,500 concrete structures project. Like his brother, he will remain in the business as a Deputy Chairman of the Group.



Seamus French

Seamus French, the current CEO of Anglo American's Bulk Commodities and Other Minerals division, will join the leadership team in January 2022; initially as Managing Director of the Europe Hub and CEO-designate, on a three-year contract.

Seamus will lead in Europe first as part of an orderly CEO handover from Ray following the delivery of the FY22 (April 2021 – March 2022) trading period, audit and accounts. Seamus will then be Group CEO and Europe Hub MD.

Seamus has already spent 18 months with the group as a Non-Executive Director.

Sir John Parker GBE FREng, Group Chairman, Laing O'Rourke said in a statement: "The Board and I have witnessed the extensive plc and international company operating experience that Seamus brings to the role. He is a world-class executive with rich engineering experience, a successful leadership and project track record, and deep knowledge of our operating markets."

Seamus said: "I am honoured that the Board has given me the opportunity to lead the business. During my time on the Board, I have been hugely impressed by Laing O'Rourke's team, its technical and engineering expertise, the current portfolio of projects and strong order book. It has a compelling vision to transform construction and to build safely and sustainably, while always caring for its people.

"Ray, Des and the leadership team have set some very exciting ambitions for the next few years and I'm confident we have the people and experience to achieve those goals, while continuing to push the boundaries of what's possible in this vital industry."

Australia changes

Meanwhile, in Australia, Managing Director Cathal O'Rourke has said after eight years as hub leader it would be a good time to enact a succession plan – and in doing so hand over executive accountability for the hub.

Cathal will remain as advisor and take up a position as a Non-Executive Director.



Rebecca Hanley

The next Managing Director of the Australian business will be Rebecca Hanley, the current Group Director of Strategy and Transformation, and leader of Laing O'Rourke's R&D operations. Rebecca has been with the business since 2016.

Sir John Parker said: "The board is delighted that an internal candidate of her capability, leadership style and commitment to the business is succeeding Cathal, to build on the successes of the Australian business."

She will undertake the role in April 2022.