

## **GORDON PAGE**

My Lady and Chancellor,

Gordon Page has made an enormous contribution to the business community of Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset over a period of two decades. After 27 years with Rolls Royce he joined Cobham plc in 1990. As Chief Executive and later Chairman, he led the company to global standing as a front-runner in the development, delivery and support of aerospace and defence systems. He is currently Chairman of Hamworthy plc. Among many other prominent roles in business and education he chairs the Multi-Area Agreement for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, an economic development partnership of local authorities, businesses, and educational and training organisations.

Gordon Page was born, as it were, into the aircraft and defence industries, where he has had a long and outstandingly successful career. His father was the late Sir Frederick Page, a brilliant and innovative aeronautical engineer who headed the Aircraft Division of British Aerospace and earlier led the design of several outstanding military aeroplanes, including the Canberra, Lightning, Tornado and Typhoon. Gordon took a different route: he read Economics and Economic History at Cambridge, and then joined Rolls Royce where he specialised in commercial marketing and was successively Head of Marketing Civil Engines, Director Helicopter Engines and Commercial Director Military Engines. He brought this great wealth of experience to the FR Group, now Cobham plc, in 1990. Initially Managing Director of Flight Refuelling Ltd, he rose rapidly to Group Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Executive, and then Chairman until his retirement in 2008.

Cobham now has an annual turnover in excess of £1bn and employs some 13,500 staff across five continents including more than 2,000 in Dorset. Gordon Page has played a key part in building this record of success. In particular he has secured existing markets and opened up new ones through judicious acquisitions. So, for example, Cobham at one time was invisible in Australia but now has 1200 employees and 40 aircraft there. Much of this expansion was driven by applying Cobham's expertise in security surveillance to the increasingly vital world of environmental survey, where the company now works for the Australian Government in the biggest contract of this kind in the world.

Since 2004 Gordon has also been Chairman of Hamworthy plc, the leading marine engineers who are also at the forefront of environmentally related technology. For him, regulations in areas such as the environment are not threats but 'windows of opportunity', as he calls them, and this philosophy has taken Hamworthy into significant new fields such as super-coolers for gas, and research on clean exhaust for ships. He remains closely involved in defence industries as Chairman of AirTanker Holdings and a Director of Lockheed Martin UK Holdings Ltd. And in complete contrast he is also Chairman of the quantity surveyors P H Warr plc. This, for him, is an exercise in promoting sustainable growth, and in building the essential links between staff skills, visible excellence and a high reputation for the company.

Gordon's expertise and powers of leadership have been recognised at national and international levels through his service as a past President of the Society of British Aerospace Companies (in two terms of office), the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Chartered Management Institute, and the Government's Industrial Development Advisory Board. He has also given immense energy and commitment to the support of business in Dorset, where he has consistently emphasised the importance of developing high-level skills and a knowledge-based economy. He formerly chaired the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Economic Partnership and now chairs the Dorset Multi-Area Agreement, a Government-supported local initiative in which local authorities, business, education and training organisations, including this University, work together for the economic benefit of the region. These varied organisations have very different missions and purposes, but Gordon's dedicated leadership, vision and drive have overcome a tendency to tribalism and created a regionally coherent and effective body with a united wish to work together for the benefit of the community. He is also strongly committed to education through his roles as Chairman of the Board of Governors at Canford School and as a Pro-Chancellor at Cranfield University, where Cobham plc has had research interests in the past. As a Trustee of the Dorset Community Foundation he is a committed supporter of local charities.

Gordon Page has a straightforward attitude to professional life ('it should be fun') and a positive style of management, where he emphasises teamwork and learning from experience, and makes it clear that he likes to see people do well. He robustly advocates internationalisation - 'if you want to get to the top you won't spend all your time here' – and his remarkable career shows what these approaches, combined with great personal skill, resourcefulness and inspired leadership, can achieve. And his leadership and achievements have brought him high honours. He was appointed a Commander of the British Empire in 2000 for services to the defence and aerospace industries, and since 2006 he has served as a Deputy Lieutenant of Dorset. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Directors and of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and in 2003 Cranfield University awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Science.

My Lady and Chancellor, I have the honour to present Gordon Page, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Business Administration, *honoris causa*.