

NOCN's and CCATF's report sets out recommendations to improve the flow of skilled and competent talent into the construction sector.

The construction and built environment sector provides the critical infrastructure, housing, repairs and maintenance to support the UK's economy and communities. Its output is over £216 billion per annum, and it provides around 8.8% of the UK's jobs. It faces four major challenges which need to be addressed by 2030:

- Reduce the major skills shortages of circa 250,000 skilled personnel up to 2027, to match the demands of a sustainable economy.
- Upskill the workforce to improve productivity through the use of digitisation, different materials, new products and new methods of working.
- Skill the workforce to support the UK in constructing the Net-Zero and sustainable housing and infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions.
- Ensure compliance with the legal requirements of the Building Safety Regulator, including safety in respect of the UK's infrastructure, by improving the level of competency of the workforce.

In response to these challenges, with support from the CLC website, we carried out a survey of employers as well as analysed the skills datasets held by the government's ONS and the CSCS carding scheme for construction (building and civils).

Our main findings were:

- The employers use a range of existing vocational training routes to bring people into industry. They see it as essential that all these routes are retained and properly funded.
- Ensure full competency of the workforce to comply with the Building Safety Act is a challenge e.g. there are 442,000 people with only a labourer card (level 1 or no qualification).
- Over the last ten years skills policy and skills system has become more fragmented across the UK and different governmental policy areas, including even the definitions of what occupations there are.
- There has been a decline in skills funding over the last ten years, alongside increased complexity in funding streams, which holds back recruitment and upskilling.
- The industry has used the single carding scheme CSCS as the mechanism for verifying competency, but it needs to be better integrated into the overall skills system.
- A number of approaches are used for recruitment despite this the industry continues to struggle to attract sufficient people into the workforce.

The report sets out four main areas for change:

- **Routes into industry:** The construction and built environment sector needs to retain all the existing routes i.e. apprenticeships (including levels 2 and 3, higher and degree), vocational competence qualifications (NVQs) and bootcamps, where these are of a high-quality (with appropriate training to facilitate entering employment). Industry, working with governments and other stakeholders, must move towards a more agile set of properly funded high-quality modularised UK wide vocational qualifications and accredited training, to match industry's strategy.

- **UK Skills system:** Industry needs to work with governments and other key stakeholders to establish a common consistent UK skills system for construction which is based on a common core for each occupation with built-in flexibility for nations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and English regional variations, as well as different approaches in the sectors such as building services engineering. This must be able to match the needs of addressing the four key challenges.
- **Carding:** Develop the CSCS scheme to support the new verification of competency under the Building Safety Act and ensure it is integrated into the UK wide skills system.
- **Recruitment:** As set out in the CLC Industry Skills Plan, industry needs to take a leading role on diversity and enhancing the various approaches currently being used with the co-ordination of a single coherent, focused and powerful message of the benefits of working in construction; under-pinned by an agreed approach to EDI.

Making consistent progress, through collaboration, across the UK in these four areas is the best way of ensuring the industry has the workforce its needs to support the move to a more sustainable economy and future.

“Nick Roberts, Construction Leadership Council Industry Sponsor for People and Skills and CEO of Travis Perkins plc said: “Construction plays an important role in the UK economy, but we all recognize the scale of the widening skills gap challenge in the industry. There is a huge opportunity if we get this right, so we welcome this report which makes an important contribution to the future workforce debate. It provides great insight from employers in the sector into how we can overcome the skills challenges we face by working more collaboratively with each other and with Government, and ensuring that we attract, develop and retain competent and productive people who have the skills needed to deliver on net zero, retrofit our buildings, look after our rich built heritage, and create a built environment that we can all be proud of.”

Notes to Editors

NOCN is an international education and skills charity which is an awarding and credentially organisation working in a number of sectors, including construction. It has been operating since 1987 and is recognised in the UK by the Government’s apprenticeship and qualifications regulator Ofqual.

The CCATF is a cross-industry initiative designed to increase employer engagement in skills and apprenticeship training. Since its inception in 2007, the CCATF has adopted a two-pronged approach: firstly, to communicate positive messages to employers regarding training and apprenticeships and secondly, to influence government policy to ensure we create the best environment for construction apprenticeship training.

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) is the construction sector’s group that works in partnership with Government and organisations of all sizes across the industry to ensure the construction sector has the voice, support and resilience needed to grow, improve productivity, attract and retain talent, and successfully transition to Net Zero.