



**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION:
SUSTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGY: HOMES THAT DON'T COST THE EARTH**

Introduction

CITB-ConstructionSkills is the Industry Training Board and Sector Skills Council for the construction industry. As a Non Departmental Public Body we work with industry to deliver a safe, professional and fully qualified construction workforce. We work with construction companies to help them improve skills, increase their competitive edge and respond to the many challenges employers face – from the low carbon agenda, through to reducing costs on-site and recruiting the best and brightest talent for their sector.

We use our robust sector specific labour market intelligence, the Construction Skills Network, to develop and deliver a range of products and services to construction employers, and we invest employer funds in a variety of ways - so that businesses can keep the skills in their workforce up-to-date, and increase their bottom line.

In Scotland we have around 100 regionally based staff who engage effectively with construction employers, federations, apprentice registration bodies, skills agencies, colleges, unions, careers advisors, universities, awarding bodies and the Scottish Government. We also have good links with HMIE, Education Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, the SCQF and other key organisations in the skills and lifelong learning environment.

CITB-ConstructionSkills has strong links with construction employers, and we would seek to engage even more closely with colleges, universities and training providers to ensure that current and future provision is in line with employer needs.

We have focused our comments specifically on Chapter 5: Skills and Training.

Response to Questions

Q43 (a). Has Chapter 5 of this consultation identified the key challenges to ensuring Scottish companies have the skills to take advantage of the opportunities expected to be on offer? Yes/No

Chapter 5 partly identifies the key challenges.

(b). If not, what other challenges are there?

This chapter identifies some of the key challenges which face the construction industry and rightly note the loss in confidence as a result of some UK Government initiatives, such as the Feed-in-Tariff. It is worth pointing out that here is a strong culture of training across construction companies in Scotland, and a willingness to train where there is a business benefit in doing so. Over 90% of all construction companies in Scotland are SMEs and many of Scotland's construction apprentices are taken on by these organisations. Despite difficult recessionary times employers

have taken on over 1,000 redundant apprentices which clearly demonstrates their commitment to training. However, in addition to the barriers outlined in this consultation it is clear that businesses do not believe that there is sufficient available information on low carbon and energy efficiency initiatives which would give them confidence to invest in these areas. CITB-ConstructionSkills has run 8 workshops to raise awareness of the Green Deal to employers and although there is a willingness to look at the opportunities which this initiative may provide, there is a strong view that there is not enough information on the tangible business benefits which they would gain from this scheme to justify business investment in skills and training.

Therefore one of the key challenges is to provide the construction industry with detailed information about new initiatives and schemes which will give them confidence to invest. At present employers note that there is a great deal of information which they do not have the time to read. A central repository of information in an easily accessible format would assist here.

In relation to the lack of training provision, CITB-ConstructionSkills is planning to map manufacturers own courses to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in order to increase the scope of available qualifications. The National Construction College is also running Train the Trainers courses in external and internal solid wall insulation for would-be trainers. The issue of capacity in the college environment is significant as decisions could be taken to scale down construction courses in light of decreased demand due to recessionary pressures. This could be further compounded by the regionalisation agenda in the post-16 review of vocational education. However, it is important to point out that if capacity is lost at this point, it will be very difficult to re-establish that capacity again when training increases. This would have a detrimental effect on government's plans to increase the number of skilled people and the number of new and up-skilled jobs. Therefore, training provision should be protected and plans to review college courses should take cognisance of future training needs rather than simply current training volumes in a recessionary environment.

The other main challenge that acts as a key driver for growth is consumer demand. Currently there has been limited public awareness raising campaigns around retrofit technologies, aside from information on free loft/cavity wall insulation or other subsidised energy efficiency measures. CITB-ConstructionSkills would note that homeowners should be made more aware of how their home is constructed and what measures are appropriate to the building type. A fabric first approach should be undertaken to manage energy use before adding additional environmental technologies such as heat pumps, solar systems etc. The general public is largely unaware of the Green Deal and there have been no public awareness raising campaigns around this to date. If employers can see that there is clear consumer demand it gives business justification for investment in skills and training in these areas.

Q44. What further action is needed to ensure there is appropriate investment in skills and training to meet these opportunities?

It is important to note that the greatest challenge around retrofit and new build is not a marked increase in new entrants to the construction industry, but re-skilling and up-skilling existing workers. This should take place at all levels from design, through to build. At present the majority of funding is targeted towards the 16-19 year old age group through Modern Apprenticeship programmes. This is clearly supported by CITB-ConstructionSkills but flexibility of funding is also required to support construction employers to re-train and re-skills existing workers who may simply

need a 'top-up' of skills and training rather than a new qualification. This is an area which requires further thought and discussion as the cost of re-skilling could prove to be a disincentive to employers in the current economic climate. If there is to be 4% growth a year in the low carbon sector then funding should be allocated to support training and development amongst workers of all ages.

Q45. How can the construction industry be made more aware of the potential funding and support for skills and training development opportunities and engage effectively with those providing training to ensure that it meets their current and future needs?

The consultation notes the range of training and support available from bodies such as Skills Development Scotland, Sector Skills Councils and private sector provision. There are also specific initiatives such as Skills Development Scotland's Low Carbon Skills Fund which is available to support employers to undertake training. However, there is a need to communicate these initiatives more widely to the industry. CITB-ConstructionSkills works very closely with the federations, trade associations, trade unions and directly with employers to help them gain an understanding of the nature and type of support on offer. Working together there is an opportunity to promote the potential funding and support for skills more widely and we would be keen to work with the Scottish Government in this regard.

CITB-ConstructionSkills has also developed a 'Cut the Carbon' website (www.cutcarbon.info) to provide useful information to employers. It provides information on government policy, grants and funding, and information on training provision by occupational and geographic area. Through our network of advisors based geographically across Scotland we have raised awareness of this site and support available to employers.

In relation to qualifications development CITB-ConstructionSkills is working with AssetSkills, Energy and Utility Skills and SummitSkills to develop a qualifications route map to 2020 in order to ensure that the correct qualifications are in place for the wider industry to access, and that these are fit for purpose.

Q46. How do we ensure that skills and training opportunities are provided on an equitable basis to all groups in society?

It is well known that the construction industry is under-represented by women and ethnic minorities and CITB-ConstructionSkills has worked with Napier University to develop research reports which highlight the key issues here. There is an increased willingness of employers to take on individuals from diverse backgrounds and there are some excellent case studies of female apprentices who have gone on to successfully run their own businesses. The issue here is around working with careers advisors, school pupils and parents to promote careers in the construction industry and career pathways which are available. These career pathways are now becoming clearer in the low carbon area and it is important to map these out clearly for young people.

CITB-ConstructionSkills runs a Construction Ambassador programme which trains individuals from the industry to go into schools and talk to primary and secondary pupils about careers in the construction industry. There are now opportunities to train ambassadors in off-site manufacturing or low carbon technologies to talk to young people about these new opportunities. Information has also been uploaded on to

Skills Development Scotland's 'My World of Work' website and case studies of individuals from under-represented groups have been added to CITB-ConstructionSkills' bconstructive website (www.bconstructive.co.uk).

Q47. Apart from training and skills opportunities are there any other issues that should be addressed to make employment in construction and other industries becomes more representative?

It is important to outline clear career pathways which take account of more traditional career progression, but which also address new and emerging technologies and off – site manufacture. This is required for both new entrants and experienced workers who wish to move into a different or related occupational area. As noted above CITB-ConstructionSkills is developing a qualifications route map which should help in this regard.

Q48. Please describe any specific difficulties relating to skills and training that apply to those in remote and island areas and your view on how these may be addressed?

There are clearly specific challenges to overcome in the remote and island communities in Scotland. One of the main issues is around lack of appropriate training provision and the subsequent necessity to travel significant distances to access the required training. This could be further compounded by pressure on college budgets and the college regionalisation agenda. It is therefore critical that future training requirements are considered in addition to current training volumes, so that provision is 'future proofed'. Online and e-learning training could also be considered, as appropriate.

Another barrier is the increased training delivery costs in remote areas. Perhaps some further thought could be given to subsidies for specific training within these areas. CITB-ConstructionSkills supports a range of employer led industry training groups in island and remote communities. These groups consist of local employers who agree an annual training programme, and are able to achieve economies of scale by driving down overall training costs by ensuring critical mass on courses which they require. This model works well where it is possible to access the required training. Capacity building is also clearly important here.

CITB-ConstructionSkills is working with the Energy Efficiency Team within the Scottish Government to support a Green Deal pilot in a rural area, in order to identify the barriers and challenges which a SME wishing to offer assessment or installation services may encounter. It is also important to consider how best to communicate with employers in these areas to ensure that they are able to access relevant information as easily as employers who are based in more urban areas.

It is important to engage directly with local employers in these areas as many of them will have innovative and practical solutions to some of the key challenges which they face.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 in the consultation identifies a number of key challenges facing the construction industry. In addition to these barriers, flexibility of funding for up-skilling and clear, concise communication to the industry are critical. In addition further work

is required to educate home owners and stimulate consumer demand which could consequently result in an increased demand for skills and training to help realise the Scottish Government's aspirations around job creation and sustainable employment. Future proofing training provision is also required to ensure that there is capacity to train once the industry begins the slow progression towards growth. CITB-ConstructionSkills and our key stakeholders would be keen to continue to work with the Scottish Government as this strategy moves forward.

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