



Skills, Training & Apprenticeships

Emerging Sector Insight

This document comprises emerging sector insight on Skills and Training in the built environment/construction sector. It was produced in response to a request for information on industry perspectives.

Please note, data is still incoming and can be added to this document at a later date.

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1.0 Current Position

UK Wide

The construction industry across Europe is undergoing a dynamic period of change, driven by the need to address climate impact, economic shifts, rising material and labour costs, and project delays. In the UK, the pressure is mounting, with a projected need for [225,000 additional construction workers by 2027](#) to meet the Labour government's ambitious 1.5 million new-homes target by the end of its five-year term. The [National Federation of Builders \(NFB\) has claimed that the goal is unreachable, unless the construction skills shortage is addressed.](#)

The recent [UK industrial strategy](#) places importance on the development of skills. This includes a new body, [Skills England](#) to bring together the fractured skills landscape and create a shared national ambition to boost the nation's skills. Further, a [new skills hub](#) has recently been launched by UK Government (In partnership with CITB and NHBC) where 5,000 more construction apprenticeship places will be made available per year thanks to £140m industry investment to get Britain building again inclusive of the recent '[planning overhaul](#)'. A total of 32 pioneering new Homebuilding Skills Hubs will deliver fast-track apprenticeships and high quality training to local areas that need more housing, while giving apprentices vital skills to boost housebuilding in the UK and drive forward the government's growth mission.

Wales

Construction is the only Wales wide priority sector group for the 4 RSP that are contracted by WG to produce skills plans. However, skills and apprenticeship funding has been impacted with [large cuts planned for 2024-2025](#) after being unable to plug the gap from the loss of EU funding. Research carried out by The Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) on behalf of ColegauCymru and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) highlights that



as a result, the [construction sector will be one of the most impacted](#). where it estimates a reduction of 565 apprentices in the construction industry, representing 25% of the 2022/23 construction apprenticeship total. This decrease is projected to reduce Gross Value Added(GVA) by up to £42.5 million, which is equivalent to 20% of the total GVA loss we anticipate from the funding cuts. In an industry operating in tight margins, this is considered a significant blow.

According to the Construction Industry Training Board, Wales currently has an inflow of 8,900 construction workers per year but an outflow of 9,200, creating a net loss. Meeting industry demand will require an additional 2,200 workers annually through 2028. Funding cuts to apprenticeships would exacerbate these shortages, limiting the industry's ability to keep pace with infrastructure and development needs.

Longer term this will influence priority areas in renewable energy where plans have been set out to "[address the shortage of planners at both local and national levels](#)". It will impact the [Net Zero Skills drive](#) and [Digital Economy, Digital Skills Mission](#) and influence the ability of the sector to respond at pace to changing legislative requirements such as the Building Safety Act and Golden Thread. This is especially relevant as the built environment/construction sector is not just about delivering buildings and infrastructure; it's about creating value for society, driving economic growth, and supporting new and emerging industries, such as renewable energy.

2.0 Industry Perspective

Challenges

Perception and disconnection - The construction industry has long struggled to attract new talent facing a persistent image problem and a lack of awareness about the opportunities it offers. This challenge is compounded by the UK education system, which has historically failed to prioritise vocational training. Despite some recent efforts, the system still struggles to effectively engage students in practical, career-focused learning. However, [Qualification Wales has set out changes](#) in line with the new Welsh Curriculum where vocational qualifications will be offered in 2025. Further [there was a pioneering change](#) to the academic qualifications in Wales with new [GCSE Built Environment](#) and [GCE AS/A level Built Environment](#) qualifications. However it is the uptake of delivering the GCSE and A-levels within schools that is a barrier. Greater awareness is needed with more schools signed up. There is a full pathway now available with Degree Apprenticeships starting in Sept 25, this gives a learner the opportunity to start on an Apprenticeship move to Higher Apprenticeship then onto a Degree Apprenticeships. Uptake of PLA's in construction have been a big success. Colleges are seeing an increase in students signing up for construction courses. Challenge is not enough tutors/assessors to meet demand. The amount of new entrant full time learners into Colleges is increasing, converting them into level 3 apprenticeships is the missed

opportunity due to the funding cuts. There is a big challenge in attracting and moving full time learners into apprenticeships especially in what is considered 'blue collar' jobs. What is also needed is a change in narrative to shift perception as noted in the [Save Construction Initiative](#) and [Generation for Change, Climate Skills paper](#).

Diversity gaps - Traditional management and reward processes in the built environment are failing women, according to [damning new research by the Circle Partnership](#). For more information on this, please refer to CEWales produced industry insight on diversity challenges shared with Welsh Government as an insight report.

Brexit fallout - Skills shortages have been an issue in the UK for some time, but the gap had been partially plugged in recent decades with workers from the European Union - a recruitment pool which has dried up after freedom of movement ended as a result of Brexit.

Fragmented skills landscape – In a sector with majority SME's and fragmentation with no clear strategic positioning, the skills providers too are disjointed. While regulations such as the Building Safety Act (Golden Thread) are shaping the outcomes towards value-driven, digitally managed processes, the sector is still struggling to bridge the widening skills gap. [CIOB's report](#) refers to the Construction Skills Crisis as persistent and a potential cause behind the recent closure of sector businesses.

Opportunities

Growing local skills and 'green jobs' – The green economy/renewable energy sector offers significant opportunities to transfer and upskill construction sector skills and plug the gap locally. Currently there is competition from international markets in this area and a prime option for the local Welsh market to develop and deliver on in alignment with the just transition/netzero drive. Further, Wales doesn't deliver skills and qualifications in groundworks, steel reinforcement, concrete and formwork. This is a considerable issue as it is linked to skills needed to enter the offshore and onshore renewable energy opportunities that are coming. CEWales Offshore Wind Intelligence reports offers further detail and recommendations for WG.

Industrialisation of the sector – There is significant waste in the sector with huge potential to standardise and facilitate an enabling environment that prioritises efficiencies and productivity. This will foster modern methods of construction, digital technologies landscape and allow for the quick transitioning of skills and creation of new skills in a digitally enabled world. A currently fragmented sector could then share benefits and operate collaboratively with other sectors such as automation, manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence.

SME landscape – The existing SME majority in the Welsh sector has mentioned a desire for greater support in green skills despite there being an increase in green skills courses now in place for the sector. Micro-credential courses are being developed and will be more

practicable to industry and small businesses. Further support is needed through free training and upskilling opportunities where uptake is embedded as part of procurement requirements.

3.0 Signposted Links

Providers and their focus

- [Construction Leadership Council](#): The Construction Leadership Council has issued a letter to Skills England outlining the importance of the construction industry as a critical growth sector and the need for an effective skills system that meets the needs of the construction industry. It has also published its [2023-24 skills plan for construction and the built environment](#) which outlines several initiatives including: the launch of a new competence approach to ensure there is an accepted, accredited definition of competence for all construction and built environment occupations. Expanding the new entrant apprenticeship brokerage service and introducing a new apprenticeship mentoring standard to increase apprenticeship starts, continuation and completions.
- [Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership](#): Cardiff Capital Region is building skills and talent capabilities to address critical skills gaps and deliver talent pipelines to drive business growth across our region. It launched its [Employment and Skills Plan 2022-2025](#). The construction sector challenges, and opportunities were developed together with industry. Recent feedback has noted, CCRSP are delivering against the opportunities and challenges set by the Construction industry and this plan will have currency through to Nov 2025.
- [CITB](#): Is the [industry training board](#) for the construction sector in England, Scotland, and Wales. They provide the [three Regional Skills Partnerships with evidence](#) and influence Qualification Wales on the reform of construction qualifications as well as promote construction with Careers Wales.
- [City & Guilds](#): City & Guilds is a leading brand for built environment education and training, offering qualifications at entry level through to Level 6, covering everything from basic hand skills, specialist trade occupations, site supervisory and management skills.
- [Chartered Management Institute](#): CMI Management Apprenticeships in Wales are accredited onto the Specification of Apprenticeships in Wales (SASW) framework.
- [NOCN Group](#): NOCN Group is one of the largest Awarding Organisations in the construction sector globally and owns the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS).
- Chartered institutions (RICS, ICE, RIBA/ARB, CICES others) – [RICS Apprenticeship pathway](#), [ICE Apprenticeships route](#), [RIBA Apprenticeship route](#). The [joint institutes \(RTPI, CIOB and RICS\)](#), representing around 200,000 professionals across the built environment, are calling for built environment Level 7 apprenticeships to be exempt from reforms in access to the Growth and Skills Levy.
- [Actuate UK, Engineering & Building Services Skills Authority](#): The Engineering and Building Services Skills Authority was convened by Actuate UK members together with other leading sector bodies, such as BEAMA, CIPHE, TICA and the standards organisation MCS, to provide a credible authoritative voice for skills across all engineering and building services.
- [National Training Federation for Wales \(NTFW\)](#) - The National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) is a Wales-wide representative body for all those organisations or individuals involved in the delivery of learning in the workplace.



- [Tywi Centre, on the Dinefwr estate near Llandeilo](#), one of the only centres in the UK offering specialist training and advice on skills essential for maintaining historic buildings. The Tywi Centre objectives are to ensure everyone who is responsible for looking after, or working on an old building has the right information, skills and materials for carrying out sensitive and appropriate repairs.
- [Qualifications Wales - What are VCSEs? Explaining Wales' new vocational qualifications - BBC News](#)
- [Career Wales](#) - Career Choices Dewis Gyrfu Ltd (CCDG) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government which was formed on 1 April 2013. Trading as Gyrfu Cymru Careers Wales, we provide all age, independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance service for Wales.
- [CWIC](#) - A leading provider of applied research and specialist training across the pan-Wales construction industry. We're helping to transform construction into a Net Zero industry – identifying and encouraging new ways of working.
- [Regional Skills Partnership](#) - The City Deal Skills and Talent programme has supported a number of projects that will offer experience to individuals of all ages an opportunity to understand what the future workforce will look like and how we can work together to meet our net zero targets.
- [Net Zero Wales](#) - With funding from the [Swansea Bay City Deal's Skills and Talent programme](#), [Swansea University's NOW Skills](#) project, in [collaboration and cooperation with industry and academia](#), will deliver a flexible model that utilises advances in online guided learning, in-person teaching and practical sessions to help achieve this aspiration.
- [Skills.Wales - Strategic Partnerships](#) - Wynne Construction, which is building Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-Y-Forwyn, employed through its collaboration with Rhondda Cynon Taf's Work and Skills programme and recruitment provider Acorn By Synergie.
- [National Federation of Builders Wales](#) - The National Federation of Builders represents builders, contractors and house builders across England and Wales. They offer Industry leading training designed for leadership & management.

Further Links

[bsi-built-environment-whitepaper.pdf](#) – BSI Group

[Built By You: Boosting skills in the construction sector – Telford College](#) – Telford College

[Sustainability Skills & Knowledge Vital to Every Job | UKGBC](#) – UKGBC

[UK 'doesn't have enough builders' for Labour's 1.5m homes - BBC News](#) – BBC News

[Government partnership with industry unlocks £140m for fast-track homebuilding skills training - CITB](#) – CITB

[City deal apprenticeship numbers 'a little bit disappointing', says council leader - Wales Online](#) – Wales Online

[Wales set to deliver one of UK's largest road projects this summer | Public Sector News](#)

[The number of new apprentices in Wales to fall by 6,000 this year - Wales Online](#)

[Concerns raised over apprenticeship funding in Wales | cambrian-news.co.uk](#)

[Draft Budget Funding Disappointment for Wales' Apprenticeships Providers - Skills.Wales](#)

[Deep cuts to apprenticeship programme will undermine new economic mission and cut talent pipeline for employers](#)

[Pressure Mounts as Welsh Government Announces Apprenticeship Cuts](#)

[Net zero: Majority of homes need heat pumps, says Welsh government - BBC News](#)

[Schools 'must do more to promote construction jobs' - BBC News](#)



[What if the UK adopted Europe's approach to construction skills? | Construction News – National Federation of Builders](#)

[CCRSP Employment & Skills Plan 2022-25 Brochure \(English\).pdf](#) – Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership

[WG Net Zero Sector Skills](#) – Net Zero Sector Skills consultancy publication to inform roadmaps.

[G4C Response - Climate Skills - Finalised FP.pdf](#) – Generation for Change, CEWales

['Cracks in the Foundations' – Building Safety in Wales](#) – Building Safety in Wales

[Construction & Built Environment | Qualifications Wales](#) – Qualification Wales

[Skills crisis: why it's time to change the conversation - CIOB People](#) - CIOB