

# **CITB NI**

## **Outline Strategy 2026-27**

### **Background**

The CITB NI Board undertook a review of its performance and operations in 2025. From this, a new Committee of the Board was established; Engagement & Strategy Committee (ESC). The role of the ESC is to better engage with the construction sector at all levels and to recommend CITB NI's overarching strategy to the Board. The ESC has engaged with industry Federations and employers over three meetings, which has determined the industry priorities for CITB NI support.

### **Strategic Priorities**

The strategic direction for CITB NI over the years has focused, in order of priority, on;

1. Promotion of industry & recruitment / attraction of new entrants
2. Review and improvement of entry level skills programmes (including Apprenticeships and Skills Academies)
3. Upskilling to meet industry needs (i.e. skills and competence issues to deliver emerging needs)
4. Regular and structured engagement with industry & awareness of skills development support and opportunities
5. Health Safety and Welfare of the workforce

Through discussions with industry Federations and employers of all sizes and areas of the sector, these have been reviewed for the current industry needs and issues. The agreed priorities for CITB NI activities, in order of priority, are now;

1. Developing technical competence of those entering the industry

2. Supporting Employers to employ new entrants to the industry

3. Promotion of sector and recruitment of new entrants

4. Upskilling the existing workforce

All areas identified above are critical to the ongoing success of the industry. In previous years, promotion to encourage new entrants to the industry has been a main priority, however through promotional activity and engagement with stakeholders, we are now in a position where there are more applicants identifying construction and the wider built environment as a career choice than are being recruited into employment or gaining placement on construction related training courses.

A barrier to employment is the low level of competence an individual has at entry to the workplace and the financial and logistical strain this imposes on the employer. Given this the two main priorities are to develop interventions that lead to base technical competency and support for the employer. Industry feedback indicates that this will help overcome resistance to employing new entrants to the sector.

Careers promotion and recruitment, along with upskilling the existing workforce will remain key elements of CITB NI's support structure. Much of the industry is already engaging with the future workforce and CITB NI's role will focus on partnering and facilitating delivery alongside industry and stakeholders. Upskilling the existing workforce will focus on the skills and qualifications that drive technical competence.

### **Delivering the Priorities**

Many individual actions will be required to deliver the priorities, but those discussed and suggested by industry bodies include but will not be limited to the areas noted below.

#### **Priority 1. Developing technical competence of those entering the industry**

- Continue to develop the Skills Academy model already piloted with industry employers.
- Review performance and delivery of training & education of entrants to the industry. Including survey of industry experience with education providers, cohesiveness of pre and post employment education & training.
- Develop the Built Environment Sectoral Partnership as an effective tool for industry to influence Departmental policy on post school education & training.
- Develop training interventions in partnership with industry and provider network that supports competency within the construction workforce.
- Develop proposals for industry support to build capacity within the provider sector to increase capacity.

#### **Priority 2. Supporting Employers to employ new entrants to the industry**

- Review DfE & DfC support for new employers / employees entering the workplace & engage with Departments to improve effectiveness.
- Work with industry partners to promote support mechanisms for new employees.
- Review CITB NI Grant funding for new entrants.
- Work with industry partners and stakeholders to develop proposals for better, more visible and coordinated support for employers who employ and train entry level individuals (School leavers, transitioning from other industries, and those not currently in employment, education, or training).
- Develop guidance & training for those inducting and mentoring new entrants to the industry.
- Create partnerships with the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to support transition into the workforce for those furthest away from being "work ready".
- Work with industry bodies to encourage employers to recruit & support new entrants.

### **Priority 3. Promotion of sector and recruitment of new entrants**

- Develop better coordination and partnerships with industry activities.
- Maintain current activities & focus on early attraction to the Built Environment as a career.
- Continue engagement with the school's system through the GCSE in Construction, Careers events, Teachers Forum, and Adopt-a-School initiatives.
- Continue to develop and improve engagement toolkits for Ambassadors, employers, and other stakeholders to promote industry.
- Continue to develop the industry Bootcamps for school age participants. Extend to other areas of NI.
- Work with industry & stakeholders to develop social media strategy and campaigns that covers all age groups.
- Continue to develop VR & AR products to promote the industry.

### **Priority 4. Upskilling the existing workforce**

- Review CITB NI Grant system to ensure resources are directed to industry priorities.
- Assess return-on-investment of the Grant system and focus Grant support on areas that improve industry competence and performance.
- Continue to focus on interventions that prepare industry for future needs and skills.
- Review balance of provision of Grant support vs delivery of training at low or no cost to in-scope employers.

### **Next Steps**

It is envisaged the priorities above will remain over the coming years but will be reviewed with industry each year in line with activity and needs. In addition, an organisational Action Plan will be developed each year to set out activities for both CITB NI and its partners & Stakeholders to achieve the outcomes identified.

CITB NI is an instrument of both NI Government (through the Department for the Economy, DfE) and the industry. It can only succeed in the objectives above with the support and cooperative action of our stakeholders. The priorities set are in line with both industry needs, and the DfE Skills Strategy. CITB NI seeks to be a catalyst to undertake a serious review of how the training & skills ecosystem works for the construction sector, and collaborate with all for the benefit of individuals, the sector, and the NI economy.