

National Infrastructure Commission Studies – Call for ideas response form
Name/Organisation: Business Services Association
<i>You have up to 500 words to outline the problem for a NIC study to focus on, and if you wish, to explain why this should be a priority. You must demonstrate how your suggestions fulfil the criteria outlined in this ‘Call for Ideas’.</i>
<p>Suggestion:</p> <p>The National Infrastructure Commission to conduct an in–depth analysis of skills in the construction industry, with particular reference to the National Infrastructure Pipeline and what is needed to deliver not just the pipeline in full, but also the individual projects contained within it.</p>
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>It is well established that the UK construction sector faces a significant skills shortage and that without considerable action the problem will worsen. The Government’s own National Infrastructure Plan for Skills found a need for 100,000 additional workers by 2020, in order to fully deliver the National Infrastructure Pipeline. Additionally, the recently published Farmer Review found that ‘with more people leaving the industry each year than joining, the construction workforce is shrinking’. Britain’s vote to leave the European Union adds extra incentive to improve our understanding of the construction workforce.</p> <p>A seemingly smaller workforce combined with wide–ranging skills gaps comes at a time when a number of major infrastructure projects are due to begin construction. HS2, Hinkley Point, Crossrail, the Roads Investment Strategy (Parts 1 and 2), Heathrow expansion and the Trans–Pennine Tunnel, amongst many others, are all underway or due to be underway in the next few years. Couple this with the possibility of HS3 and Crossrail 2 and the UK has a plethora of major, complex projects on the horizon, requiring significant increases in the number of skilled construction workers.</p> <p>The overall scale of the skills gap is well understood, however the details of the scale of specific gaps within different parts of the sector is relatively unclear. The BSA would therefore like to see the NIC conduct an in–depth analysis of skills within the construction sector looking at the size and nature of gaps within rail, road, energy and aviation, to name a few. Further analysis could then be conducted within each of these ‘sub–sectors’ for example looking at shortages in high–speed rail, track maintenance</p>

and rail system management. Once complete, this analysis should then be incorporated into the National Infrastructure Pipeline, highlighting how many workers and of what skill level are required for the delivery of specific projects. BSA members involved in delivering large parts of the pipeline would welcome an understanding of what is required and when. The National Infrastructure Pipeline and the National Infrastructure Pipeline for Skills are two sides of the same coin and should be presented as such. An in-depth skills analysis conducted by the NIC would allow this and allow construction companies to better understand where it should prioritise training and re-skilling.

Once completed, the analysis can then inform NIC proposals for shrinking and ultimately eliminating the skills gap. The BSA has previously proposed measures on shortening the time-lag between similar projects. Examples would include Crossrail and Crossrail 2, as well as HS2 and so called 'HS3'. Doing so would diminish the risk of skilled workers dissipating onto different projects and losing a specialised talent pool.

Another measure the BSA proposed in our response to the National Infrastructure Assessment consultation was the establishment of specialised infrastructure colleges. The National College for High-Speed Rail demonstrates a desire to train and re-skill workers on a specific area of infrastructure. BSA members have expressed their enthusiasm for being involved in such colleges and helping shape the skillsbase they need to deliver future projects. As such the BSA would welcome the establishment of further such institutions, with a particular priority given to those areas of construction with the most acute shortages.

Please e-mail this form to: NationallInfrastructureCommissionSpecificStudy@HMTreasury.gsi.gov.uk