



**September 25<sup>th</sup> 2003**

**CONSTRUCTIONSKILLS BECOMES THE NEW SECTOR SKILLS  
COUNCIL FOR CONSTRUCTION**

Today (September 25<sup>th</sup>) Charles Clarke the Secretary for State for Education will give the green light to the new sector skills council for the construction industry. Known as **ConstructionSkills**, the new SSC will comprise CITBGB in partnership with CITBNI (Northern Ireland) and CIC (Construction Industry Council) and will officially be launched today when Charles Clarke hands over the licence giving ConstructionSkills the go-ahead.

In line with other SSCs, ConstructionSkills is an UK-wide organisation that fully represents employers' skills needs and is responsible for tackling the skills and productivity issues in its sector. As a Sector Skills Council, ConstructionSkills will focus on four key priorities:

- Reducing skills gaps and shortages;
- Improving productivity and business performance;
- Increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities;
- Improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, further and higher education and national occupational standards.

All three organisations are already very proactive in these areas and will continue with work relating to these issues. But SSC status also provides significant benefits:

- **A strategic body:** ConstructionSkills will be empowered by Government to use its sector expertise to challenge the status quo at all levels in Government, with funding bodies and education to achieve key objectives. ConstructionSkills will use its contact with decision-makers to influence policies that impact on the sector's skills levels and productivity. An example is the partnership between CITB and the Learning and Skills Council, which is working towards an agreement that will give ConstructionSkills influence over around £300million of training funding.

- **An all industry approach:** By working in partnership the SSC will cover the whole of the UK and will represent both the craft and professional sectors thus providing an integrated approach to recruitment and training. As part of its commitment to increasing the student numbers for construction degrees ConstructionSkills has pledged £250,000 in graduate sponsorship for 2003/04, as a pilot project.
- **An influence on the learning process:** ConstructionSkills will have the mandate to influence learning supply, in schools, further and higher education. The SSC's aim is to ensure that education and training better meet the needs of industry so that young people are better prepared for the world of work. ConstructionSkills will be campaigning for increased benefits to help people through the work-based phase of construction training.
- **A supply chain approach:** ConstructionSkills covers the entire construction supply chain and will facilitate more project based learning and training solutions where the client, contractor and local college work together to devise a training programme to meet the demands of a construction project in the area. An example is the ConstructiveSouthWest partnership where the building of a new university campus is providing training opportunities for local unemployed people.
- **A focus on improving industry performance:** As an SSC, ConstructionSkills will focus on providing skills to improve the industry's performance. This means that there will increased emphasis on Management and Supervisory training and working with organisations such as Constructing Excellence to deliver this training. Plans are also underway for a more extensive roll out of the successful On-site Assessment and Training Scheme, which enables companies to train their existing staff on-site.

Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Charles Clarke said: "The importance of skills cannot be overestimated. There is a huge economic and social case for improving the country's skill base. As the construction industry is one of this country's largest employers it is pivotal to the overall success of the economy. The new Sector Skills Council will play a crucial role in raising skill levels to help us compete with the best in the world. Sector Skills Status will help the CITB build on an already successful track record and ensure that education and training meets the needs of employers."

Minister for Skills and Vocational Education, Ivan Lewis said:

"The Skills Strategy published this summer places Sector Skills Councils at the forefront of our drive to improve skills. The Construction SSC is an important step in putting the network in place by next summer and will be beneficial for the sector, building on the successes of construction sector bodies. Together, representing the industry from craft to professions, the SSC will be able to work with the whole industry as well as colleges and Government agencies to achieve training solutions meeting the needs of employers and individuals."

Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Construction at DTI, said: "Since 1997 we have boosted apprenticeships from 89 thousand to 220 thousand. With an estimated four thousand construction skills vacancies in London alone, this partnership is vital to ensure we build the houses, schools and hospitals to meet our society's needs. I welcome the award of the Sector Skills Council licence. My Department will continue to work closely with the ConstructionSkills partners to achieve real benefits in terms in increased productivity, competitiveness, and job satisfaction for everyone working in the industry"

Sir Michael Latham, Chairman of CITB commented: "This is an exciting development for us and represents real benefits for employers. As an SSC, ConstructionSkills reaches more people in the industry and has more influence over skills policy and funding. In this way ConstructionSkills can ensure that construction gets its fair share of skills funding and that the employer's voice is heard where it matters. Becoming an SSC is a vital next step in CITB's commitment to reduce skills shortages and improve productivity as outlined in the Accelerating Change agenda."

Chairman of CITB Northern Ireland Sean Campbell added, "Working in partnership under the ConstructionSkills banner will be an important step in working towards a fully competent and qualified workforce. It will also bring such important issues as health and safety, apprenticeships and skills shortages to the top of the government's agenda."

Turlough O'Brien, Chairman of Construction Industry Council comments: "CIC is delighted to be an integral part of the new Sector Skills Council and is fully committed to achieving the goals set out in our business plans, which in time will contribute to meeting the skills and recruitment targets of the Strategic Forum for Construction."

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**Notes to Editors:**

- CITBGB, CITBNI and CIC will not merge into one body; they will remain separate organisations, have their own business plans and budgets and continue to provide some separate services to their specific industry groups. ConstructionSkills is the SSC identity and will be used by all three organisations as appropriate.
- CITB will retain its Industry Training Board status and hence the Levy Grant system will remain intact and it will continue to serve the needs of those companies that it represents within this status.
- ConstructionSkills has the support of the Construction Confederation and all its member federations, as well as of the Federation of Master Builders, the National Specialist Contractors Council and many other construction federations and associations. (add in associations/federations relevant to CIC and CITBNI)
- Information about SSCs and their responsibilities can be found at [www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk)
- CITB is working closely with the proposed SUMMIT Skills SSC, covering other areas in the built environment arena including electrotechnical, plumbing, and heating and ventilation to ensure that areas of mutual interest are appropriately covered.

**For further information please contact the CITB Press Office on 0207 600 7700  
or the CIC Press Office on 0207 399 7407.**