

Egan Review of Skills: Response from the Construction Industry Council

General Approach Leadership and Process

This response has been compiled by CIC on behalf of ConstructionSkills and CIC members (a full list of which is attached) following consultation with colleagues at CITB and CIC members.

ConstructionSkills is the new Sector Skills Council (SSC) for construction, which is a partnership between CIC, CITB GB and CITB NI. In common with other SSCs, our objectives are to:

- Reduce skills gaps and shortages and help employers and employees to make informed career and personal development choices
- Improve productivity and business performance in the sector
- Increase the opportunities for everyone in the workforce to develop their careers and improve their productivity, as well as ensure equal opportunities for all sections of the workforce
- Improve the supply of learning options, including the development of apprenticeships, higher education courses and national occupational standards.

CIC is the representative forum for the industry's professional bodies, research organisations and specialist trade associations. CIC's members represent over 500,000 professionals who are engaged in commissioning, planning, designing, constructing, regulating, managing and maintaining the built environment, and more than 25,000 firms.

We are greatly concerned that the Egan Review of Skills may duplicate work already covered by the remit of ConstructionSkills. Additionally we feel strongly that ConstructionSkills, with its remit to address skills issues across the construction industry, should be fully involved in this Review of Skills and any follow-up activities. It is regrettable that there has been no dialogue between the Review team and ConstructionSkills.

We are keen to see a clear and unequivocal definition of 'sustainable community'. The accepted definition of sustainability is as a balance between economic, environmental and social issues, but the definition in the context of the review seems skewed towards the economic and social issues as opposed to the environmental aspects.

In addition to the lack of linkage to the relevant Sector Skills Councils, the review has apparently ignored several other current initiatives which are providing leadership to the professions' joint approach to skills development. These are listed below and each is picked up in more detail in our responses to specific questions:

- the **Futures Group** (all built environment professions working collaboratively to achieve greater unity and collaboration, particularly in the area of developing generic skills);
- **Accelerating Change in Built Environment Education (ACBEE)**;
- development of **Generic Core Learning Modules/Common Learning Outcomes**;
- the **Professional Skills Survey**; and
- the **Occupational Standards Framework for the Built Environment**.

Each of these areas of activity should be investigated by the Review Team.

Specific Response to Questions

1. *The general approach described above assumes that simply 'skilling up' for delivery whilst maintaining existing cultures, systems and processes is unlikely to achieve the step change envisaged in the Sustainable Communities Plan. Do you agree?*

Skilling up alone may not achieve the step change described in the Sustainable Communities Plan. However, skills development is important and must react to, and in some instances lead, necessary changes in systems, processes and culture.

Other issues that ought to be addressed to help deliver sustainable communities include:

- Declining availability of public sector housing (this could be addressed, for example by encouraging reinvestment of income from 'rent to buy');
- Planning processes, which should both be speeded up and encourage a holistic approach so that communities have access to homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, transport, etc which work together;
- Empty and under-used housing stock which may have a detrimental affect upon communities and inflate house prices, the problem of empty housing may at least be partly addressed through maintenance;
- Clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities associated with achieving sustainable communities;
- Lack of employer investment in some regions;
- The need to increase regeneration and use of brown field sites;
- The need to increase social responsibility amongst the community as a whole.

2. Do you consider that Local Authorities should take the lead role in coordinating delivery of the sustainable communities agenda? If not, who is better placed to do this?

It is appropriate for Local Authorities to hold an operational responsibility for delivery of the sustainable communities agenda at a micro level. Additionally, a strategic national approach is needed which addresses issues such as training and building/fire/water etc regulations, and provides guidance and support to Local Authorities.

3. What changes could be made to the process by which developers bring forward proposals for major development projects and to the way local authorities consider and reach decisions which would:

- bring greater certainty and speed of decision;
- bring greater understanding and uniformity in processes across different local planning authorities; and
- engender a more collaborative approach to planning from the outset between key stakeholders, including local communities?

These three issues (a, b, and c) are interrelated and should be addressed together.

The current public inquiry process is adversarial, gives large developers an advantage over smaller firms who are less able to afford the cost and time of disputing planning decisions, and is not conducive to speedy delivery of development. The planning process could be speeded up if uniformity in process were achieved through adoption of national guidelines for development and the principles of development were accepted within a geographical area. These changes will have to come through legislation and best practice guidelines will also have their part to play.

Professional skills

4. A range of professions/occupations have a core role in delivering sustainable communities – including built environment professionals (architects, planners, urban designers, highways engineers, surveyors etc), developers and local authority officers. Do you consider that there are generic skills, knowledge and behaviours that all should have? If so what are these?

Everyone involved in delivering sustainable communities needs a range of generic 'soft' skills including communication, customer service and time management skills. Other areas where professionals will increasingly require greater proficiency include: community liaison; IT and communications technologies; economics, health and safety, understanding of issues relating to environmental impact and knowledge of community issues; and understanding of each other's roles. Industry already has a substantial amount of work in place which identifies generic and specialist areas of skills, competence and knowledge.

At the same time there will be new specialist skills needs for the development of sustainable communities.

The Professional Institutions in the built environment have established a Futures Group which is embarking on an ambitious programme leading to increased integration between the Institutions. One strand of this work is the development of generic business and other core skills as a core activity across all professions

5. Are the current distinctions between professions/occupations appropriate for delivery of 21st century sustainable communities? If not is there a need for new or differently defined professions?

Professional distinctions provide recognition of the role and training an individual is likely to have. Therefore any change in professional designations must be informed, well thought out and taken forward with the inclusive backing and support of the professional bodies. The development of professional formation across the built environment has been a continually evolving process of refinement and renewal.

We recognise that there is an increasing need for multi-skilling and a more holistic approach could:

- help address evolving skills needs;
- improve professionals' respect and understanding of each other's roles;
- allow easier career progression within the industry;
- avoid wastage of resources through duplication and competitive work (for example promoting careers in the industry as a whole might have more positive affect than institutions competing with each other).

Greater multi-skilling could in part be achieved by a more cross-disciplinary approach to education, rather than necessarily requiring changes to professional distinctions. As indicated above (question 4) recent and ongoing work and practice is already moving towards this objective within the construction industry. Any non-statutory new initiative regarding the development of skills for sustainable communities which does not have the enthusiastic commitment of the existing professional bodies will inevitably end up in competition with them.

The government has to an extent reduced opportunities for an holistic approach by spreading the remit for construction related professions across a variety of government departments.

It is likely that changes in technology, legislation and working/procurement practices may result in new professional specialisms developing (for example Home Condition Survey Inspectors) as well as market led blurring, declining or growth of some professions.

6. *Is the current approach to education and training across the core professions delivering the right skills, knowledge and behaviours?
a) If not - what changes need to be made - at undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development level?*

It should be noted that there is already substantial activity in addressing this issue. For example, Accelerating Change in Built Environment Education (ACBEE) was established as a means of focusing on the need to raise standards in built environment higher education and to encourage universities, industry and the professional institutions to deliver courses that are more relevant to industry's needs and give students real experience of multidisciplinary teamwork.

It is likely that many existing professionals will be thrust into a sustainability focused role, rather than trained for it, so training to integrate sustainability thinking into the day to day and strategic management of projects is important as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). There is a danger of professionals continuing past activities without the necessary radical shift towards investing and developing for the future.

All education and training programmes need to be updated on a regular basis to take account of changing technologies, regulations, legislation and social/demographic trends. The industry is clear about what it needs from its professionals through its strategies and newly developed performance measures. However, it does need government direction and funding to enable academic providers to respond to industry needs.

- 6b) *Is there a case for some kind of crosscutting foundation course for all core professions?*

There is definitely a case for crosscutting interdisciplinary common core learning for professionals in the built environment. Different professions should not be isolated from each other in their training, education, Initial Professional Development (IPD) and CPD. The output of many courses would be improved if greater emphasis was placed upon imparting knowledge about the construction process, what happens on site, the roles of others in the professional team etc.

CIC is coordinating work with several Professional Institutions to produce an agreed schedule of common graduate learning outcomes for eventual inclusion in Professional Institutions' requirements for recognised Higher Education courses. We are also investigating the potential to develop a generic approach to CPD across Professional Institutions.

- 6c) *Who should deliver and benchmark such a course?*

Common core learning could be delivered through generic core modules within course programmes, probably in the first year of an undergraduate course, or as a foundation course possibly in the form of a vocational A'level. Employers and Professional Institutions should be consulted on the content of common core learning prior to a judgment being made on the mode of delivery. Existing professionals should also maintain up-to-date common core knowledge and competence through CPD.

There is already a platform of delivery agents and it makes no sense to add new organisations into the field. The best agents for delivering and benchmarking common generic learning are the professional bodies working in unison. The framework of Occupational Standards for the built environment provide the means for benchmarking and inter-relating the sector's academic, vocational and profession qualifying programmes.

7. *What should the role of the professional institutions and institutes be in shaping and delivering the right skills for the future?*

Professional Institutions' membership requirements have a significant influence upon HE programmes and other aspects of skills development. As membership of a Professional Institution is a means of gaining professional recognition, currently for up to 500,000 people, it is logical for this to continue. Professional Institutions are being encouraged and supported to ensure their requirements reflect the changing needs of industry. In order to achieve delivery of the right generic skills for the future it is essential for the Professional Institutions to work in unison.

8. *Is there a shortage of people with appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours among the core professions? If so which professions are experiencing the greatest shortage against demand? Are the shortages applicable both to the public and the private sectors? What evidence do you have for any shortages?*

Within ConstructionSkills CIC is conducting an extensive Professional Skills Survey. We would suggest reference be made to the findings of this research (a report will be published in February) rather than research duplicated.

Additionally it is recommended that the Task Force refer to the CIC Construction Professional Services Survey report (downloadable from www.cic.org.uk) and CITB Skills Foresights Reports (downloadable from www.citb.org.uk) for information about demand for skills, and Higher Education Statistics Agency figures for information about trends for enrolment on relevant degree courses.

9. *What do you believe are the reasons for any shortages in supply among the core professions and how can these be addressed – in the short, medium and long terms?*

As mentioned above (8) CIC is conducting an extensive Professional Skills Survey. We would suggest reference be made to the findings of this research.

ACBEE, as mentioned above (6a), was formed to focus on the need for built environment higher education and the industry it serves to attract, recruit and retain sufficient graduates. Any activity needs to be industry driven and may require changes in employment conditions, in tandem with activities such as the CITB ConstructionSkills Positive Image Campaign, the school centred Curriculum Centre Initiative and National Construction Week. Better quality information, and better university/industry links, as recognised by the ACBEE will be critical in the longer term. The image of the industry is probably the greatest influence on recruitment to the professions: ConstructionSkills is targeting this key issue.

10. *Is there a need to rebrand the core professions engaged in delivering sustainable communities to make them more attractive to a wide range of possible new entrants, from school children to those in mid career looking for a new direction?*

The industry as a whole needs to be positively branded. It is important to raise public awareness that the industry offers many opportunities for professional level careers and attract a broad range of entrants into the industry. A whole industry approach would reduce the risk of duplicating promotional work and help to reduce fragmented promotion of the professions. However, real change is likely to have more impact than branding in the medium to long term.

11. *Do you consider that local authority staff (members and officers) and built environment professionals have the right economic/financial skills, knowledge and culture to work positively with developers in delivering improvements to local communities? How and by whom could any omission in training and knowledge be addressed?*

There are a number of generic skills and common areas of knowledge needed for those involved in the development of sustainable communities (see our response to question 4).

Whilst it would be advantageous for all those working in this area to have generic competences and knowledge, this would be impossible to enforce (except in relation to architects as their title is subject to statutory regulation) without significant legislative changes. Any attempt to compel elected council members to demonstrate specified knowledge and competence would potentially damage the democratic process.

Development of sustainable communities is too broad an issue for relevant skills to be the responsibility of a single organisation but should be the responsibility of all relevant professions and industries. Government (national and local) should take a lead in the development of sustainable communities. Therefore government should support relevant industries in taking responsibility for skills through the relevant Sector Skills Councils. Where the market fails to deliver the skills needed, government should intervene by providing financial support to students on courses in skills shortage areas, provide additional funding to relevant HE and FE departments, fund promotion of relevant careers, and entice employers (especially SMEs) to train new entrants and existing staff.

12. *Outside the core professions, there are a number of other groups that have a role to play in delivering sustainable communities. What education, training or information should be made available to these groups and how could this best be delivered?*

Many groups may have a role to play in delivery sustainable communities, including:

- members of the public as community participants, clients, tenants and owners of property;
- landlords, public and private, as they have a role in maintaining properties and discouraging anti-social behaviour amongst tenants;
- the insurance industry;

- the police and others involved in the legal system;
- social services;
- teachers and careers advisors, so that they can give their students/clients more informed guidance about relevant careers;
- councillors and other non professionals involved in planning decisions; and
- business managers, who could benefit from being made aware of the potential business benefits of investing in locations with affordable housing, good transport links and relatively high unemployment.

For these groups facilitation of awareness should be a key aim, with training signposted for those who wish to participate. Outside the core professions compulsory training would be largely inappropriate and, as previously discussed (question 11) compulsion for training would require legislation. Work is already in hand to help support clients and client advisors.

Also see 13

13. *Do you think it would be helpful if elected members and local authorities were offered training in delivering sustainable communities? Do you believe that this ought to be compulsory? Who should provide this training?*

It is imperative that those entrusted with the decision making for local communities should understand the longer term implications of their actions. Sustainable communities require all involved to act in concert, with vision, foresight and accountability. Appropriate training on an ongoing basis would help this process.

However, as indicated in our response to question 11 compulsion would present problems in relation to elected council members. Training must as always be delivered by appropriately qualified and competent individuals and organisations. As the range of issues relating to sustainable communities are broad it may be that a number of different organisations, or new specialists, should provide training. The contents of training courses should be guided by relevant bodies, such as Professional Institutions and CABE, and by the industry's **Occupational Standards**.

Other

14. *Do you believe that the development industry is sufficiently informed about or committed to sustainable development? How do you believe any gap in expertise can best be remedied?*

Awareness and commitment to sustainable development is inconsistent and in some cases poor. Many people have yet to see the business case for, and urgent need for, sustainable development and may be waiting to be pushed by legislation. Additionally sustainability tends to be understood in terms of 'green' environmental issues rather than the broader agenda suggested in '*Sustainable communities: building for the future*'. If 'green' environmental issues are not the core focus of the Egan review then perhaps sustainability is not the most appropriate word to use to promote broad awareness.

Examples in the development industry of enlightened and changing behaviour leading to more sustainable solutions should be promoted, disseminated and rewarded with support from Government (nationally, regionally and locally) and those involved, encouraged to share with others to develop wider take up.

We should be looking at maintenance and 'whole life costing' as key aspects of achieving sustainable communities.

We are happy for this response to be quoted.



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Chief Executive, CIC

CIC MEMBERSHIP AT JULY 2003

FULL MEMBERSHIP

ABE	Association of Building Engineers
ACA	Association of Consultant Architects
ACostE	Association of Cost Engineers
ACE	Association of Consulting Engineers
ACBS	Association of Consultant Building Surveyors
APM	Association for Project Management
APS	Association of Planning Supervisors
BIAT	British Institute of Architectural Technologists
BIFM	British Institute of Facilities Management
BRE	Building Research Establishment
BSRIA	Building Services Research and Information Association
CIBSE	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
CIOB	Chartered Institute of Building
CIRIA	Construction Industry Research and Information Association
CQSA	Consultant Quantity Surveyors Association
DSA	District Surveyors Association
GF	Ground Forum
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers
ICES	Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors
ICWGB	Institute of Clerks of Works of Great Britain
IHIE	Institute of Highways Incorporated Engineers
IHT	Institution of Highways & Transportation
IMBM	Institute of Maintenance and Building Management
IoP	Institute of Plumbing
IStructE	Institution of Structural Engineers
LI	Landscape Institute
NFDC	National Federation of Demolition Contractors
NHBC	National House-Building Council
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SCI	Steel Construction Institute
TRADA	Timber Research And Development Association

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

ACED	Association of Civil Engineering Departments
AOHOS	Association of Heads of Surveying
BACH	British Association of Construction Heads
CHSG	Construction Health & Safety Group
CIMCIG	Chartered Institute of Marketing Construction Industry Group
CICA	Construction Industry Computing Association
CPBEM	Council of Professors of Building Engineering and Management
FoB	Faculty of Building
FPS	Federation of Property Societies
ICM	Institute of Construction Management
RSME	Royal School of Military Engineering
SCHOSA	Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture
SCL	Society of Construction Law
SPONGE	(a network of young construction professionals focusing especially on sustainability)
TAG	Local Government Technical Advisers Group
TeCSA	Technology and Construction Solicitors' Association