

The Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP
The Prime Minister
No.10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

29th January 2008

Dear Gordon,

As you may recall I have over many years taken a close interest in the construction industry and am currently Chairman of the Construction Industry Council.

During the lifetime of the Labour Government, there have been close contacts between government and the industry on a range of issues, not least the industry improvement programme that stemmed from the 1998 Egan Report 'Rethinking Construction'. The industry has however become increasingly frustrated by the lack of a consistent and clear relationship with government.

Since I ceased to be construction minister following the 2001 General Election, there have been 6 different Ministers with responsibility for the industry and their period in office has got progressively shorter, Stephen Timms had less than seven months in post. Both of his immediate predecessors had just one year. However hard they work to build relationships and confidence – and Stephen tried very hard indeed – the task is simply unrealistic if they are not given time to make a mark.

The construction industry is not just hugely important to our economy, employing more than 2million people and accounting for 8% of GDP. It is also fundamental to the delivery of so much of the government's agenda – the schools, the homes, the hospitals, prisons, transport infrastructure and Olympic venues to name just some of the most significant.

The industry is also a complex one, comprising a range of different disciplines – including design, engineering, building, materials production and facilities management. Getting to know the key players and understanding their interrelationships is not something that can be successfully accomplished in a matter of months.

That is why it is, in my judgement, so unfortunate that the industry has not enjoyed a continuing relationship with one Minister in recent years. I am sure that Shriti Vadera if her portfolio includes construction will, like her predecessor, do her utmost to develop contacts and build relationships with the key players in the industry. But her task will be made more difficult because industry leaders increasingly feel that the government is not according them the attention they believe they deserve.

I am sorry to have to write in these terms but I cannot conceal just how damaging the recent merry-go-round of Ministers has been to the government's relationships with one of the country's most important industries.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Raynsford MP