BEFA
Built Environment Futures Assembly

University of the Built Environment
EST. 1919

Built Environment Strategic Workforce Planning for 2030

Supported by

CIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONS TOGETHER

Construction Leadership Council

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce this report from the Built Environment Futures Assembly's (BEFA) INSPIRE event, *'Built Environment Strategic Workforce Planning for 2030'*. The event brought together senior voices from industry, government, education, professional bodies and economic forecasting to consider one of the most pressing questions facing the built environment: *how do we ensure the sector has the right people in the right place at the right time?*

The report challenges us to move beyond familiar references to a 'skills crisis'. While the sector's workforce pressures are real and persistent, the solutions cannot be limited to simply calling for more entrants, more courses or more initiatives. We need a more strategic, evidence-led understanding of demand, supply, capability and competence across the whole workforce system.

Central to this is the need for more data-led workforce planning. The sector already generates a significant amount of information, but it is too often fragmented across employers, training providers, professional bodies and government. If workforce planning is to become genuinely strategic, we need better ways of bringing this data together to create a clearer, more dynamic picture of current capacity, future demand and emerging competency gaps.

The emergence of artificial intelligence makes this task still more urgent. AI has the potential to transform productivity, technical processes and professional services across the built environment, but it also raises fundamental questions about job design, entry-level roles, learning pathways, accountability and the development of professional judgement. The sector must avoid seeing AI purely as a tool for short-term efficiency. Instead, it should be understood as a structural workforce issue, requiring consideration of which skills will be automated, which will become more valuable and how future professionals will gain the experience needed to practise safely and responsibly.

The discussions captured in this report also underline the importance of focusing on the professional and technical workforce as well as trades and site-based roles. The future of the built environment will depend on architects, surveyors, engineers, planners, project managers and other professionals being equipped to operate in an environment shaped by AI, regulation, sustainability and changing delivery models.

At the University of the Built Environment, and through BEFA, we believe education and upskilling must play a central role in this transition, although the sector needs to create pathways that are more modular, more responsive and more closely aligned to real workforce demand.

We extend our sincere thanks to all speakers, panellists, partners and attendees who contributed to this important discussion. We hope this report helps inform practical action across the sector and supports a more coordinated approach to building the future capacity, capability and competency of the built environment workforce.

Mark Farmer
Chair, BEFA
Industry Sponsor, CLC People & Skills

1. Introduction – shifting the conversation from skills shortages to strategic workforce planning

When it comes to skills, the built environment faces a permacrisis as demand outpaces the workforce's ability to adapt. An ageing workforce is retiring, while too few young people are entering the sector.

Training through apprenticeships and qualifications takes time, making shortages difficult to address quickly. Meanwhile, growing complexity in digital construction, sustainability and building safety is increasing demand for specialist skills. Combined with economic uncertainty, retention issues and an outdated industry image, this has created persistent workforce gaps.

Time, then, for a more strategic approach, but how can that be achieved?

For the latest in its 'INSPIRE' series, the Built Environment Futures Assembly (BEFA) brought together experts from industry, academia, economic forecasting and government in Bloomsbury, London, to explore that question through presentations and a panel discussion.

The event, ***Built Environment Strategic Workforce Planning for 2030***, was held on Wednesday 15 April 2026 and chaired by BEFA's Chair, Mark Farmer.

Framing the challenge, ***Aled Williams, Executive Director of BEFA*** and the event's facilitator, said: *"What we need is a shared strategic view of workforce capacity, the training pipeline, change in skills needs and future demand across housing, infrastructure, retrofit, net zero and digital.*

"The challenge is not simply about attracting new entrants, but about upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce, with a stronger focus on productivity, quality and adaptability."

The event aimed to shift the conversation away from skills shortages towards strategic workforce planning, underpinned by foresight and systems-level thinking.

This report captures the key themes and takeaways from those discussions.

BEFA
Built Environment Futures Assembly
INSPIRE
INfluence for Skills, Productivity, Industry, Research & Education

What is BEFA?

The University of the Built Environment (formerly UCEM) created the Built Environment Futures Assembly (BEFA) as an employer-led leadership forum to tackle long-term sector challenges, particularly around skills, professionalism and workforce capability.

BEFA brings together leaders from industry, government, professional bodies and education to improve collaboration across a traditionally fragmented sector. Its mission is to strengthen future capacity, capability and competency through research, knowledge sharing and practical action.

BEFA's INSPIRE series supports this mission through talks, seminars and events, creating a platform for thought leadership and industry dialogue.

Facilitator

Aled Williams
Executive Director, BEFA

BEFA
Built Environment Futures Assembly

INSPIRE

INfluence for **S**kills, **P**roductivity, **I**ndustry, **R**esearch & **E**ducation

Presenters

Mark Farmer
Chair, BEFA and industry Sponsor for the Construction Leadership Council's People and Skills Network

On what strategic workforce planning is, why it's important and what building blocks are already there and what more we need

Simon Rawlinson
Head of Strategic Research and Insight, Arcadis UK

Presenting a case study on strategic workforce planning in energy transmission and what the wider industry can learn from it

Tim Lyne
Associate Director, Oxford Economics

On the evolving research behind the Construction Workforce Outlook – and why it's a vital data source for workforce planning

Karen Wood
Skills and Labour Markets Lead, Construction Department for Business and Trade

On the Government's work to build the capacity and capability of the construction and built environment workforce, including a new Construction Jobs Plan

Panellists

Peter Rolton
Executive Chairman, Rolton

Jonathan Mitchell
Deputy Director, Construction, Skills England

Lynda Rawsthorne
Head of Government Property Profession, Cabinet Office

Prof Ashley Wheaton
Vice Chancellor, University of the Built Environment

Andy George
Director, Industry Attraction & Skills, Home Builders Federation

2. What is strategic workforce planning?

Delivering the event's keynote, Mark Farmer argued that the industry must move beyond reactive responses to labour shortages and adopt a more strategic, evidence-based approach to workforce planning.

At a time of economic volatility, where some workforces were being cut back, Farmer acknowledged how difficult it can be to reconcile ongoing skills shortages with a slowing market.

Strategic workforce planning, Farmer argued, is not simply about recruiting more people. It is about understanding the whole workforce system: existing workers, new entrants, retirees and those leaving the sector and aligning that supply with future demand. *"It's certainly more than just saying there's a skills crisis"*, he noted. The real issue, he explained, is understanding whether the challenge is a shortage of people or a shortage of people with the right competencies: *"the two are not the same."*

Demand-led, not supply-led

A central theme of Farmer's argument was that workforce planning must start with demand. Too often, the conversation begins with supply-side solutions: more apprenticeships, more college places and more training initiatives. While important, these only work if they are calibrated against actual market needs.

"The skills system ultimately is demand-led", Farmer said. That means understanding what projects are genuinely coming forward, where they are located, what disciplines they require and when they will be delivered.

This matters in construction because of its cyclical nature. Demand fluctuates sharply with economic conditions, investor confidence and public spending priorities. Political ambition, Farmer argued, cannot be mistaken for a deliverable pipeline. Housing targets and infrastructure commitments may shape the narrative, but workforce planning must focus on viability, funding and delivery reality. He cited the Government's ambition to build 1.5 million homes, which would be unlikely to be delivered in this Parliament, as an example of aspiration not matching reality.

Looking beyond new entrants

Farmer challenged the sector's heavy focus on attracting new entrants, arguing that this is only one part of the workforce equation. The existing workforce remains the industry's greatest asset and one of its biggest opportunities for productivity improvement.

Upskilling and reskilling existing professionals and tradespeople will be critical as the sector adapts to new technologies, sustainability requirements and regulation. This is particularly important in professional and technical roles, including architects, engineers, surveyors, planners and construction managers.

> *"The challenge lies in bridging the gap between future workforce needs and the reality of how the industry absorbs people when workloads are low.*
>
> **Mark Farmer, BEFA**

He also questioned whether traditional occupational silos remain fit for purpose, arguing future workforce models may need to become more modular and flexible.

Better data, better decisions

A recurring theme in Farmer's presentation was data. Effective workforce planning depends on understanding the workforce *"inventory"*, that is, who is in the sector, where they are and what they can do. *"We need to understand the pipeline of people coming in and we need to match that to the demand of skills going forward."*

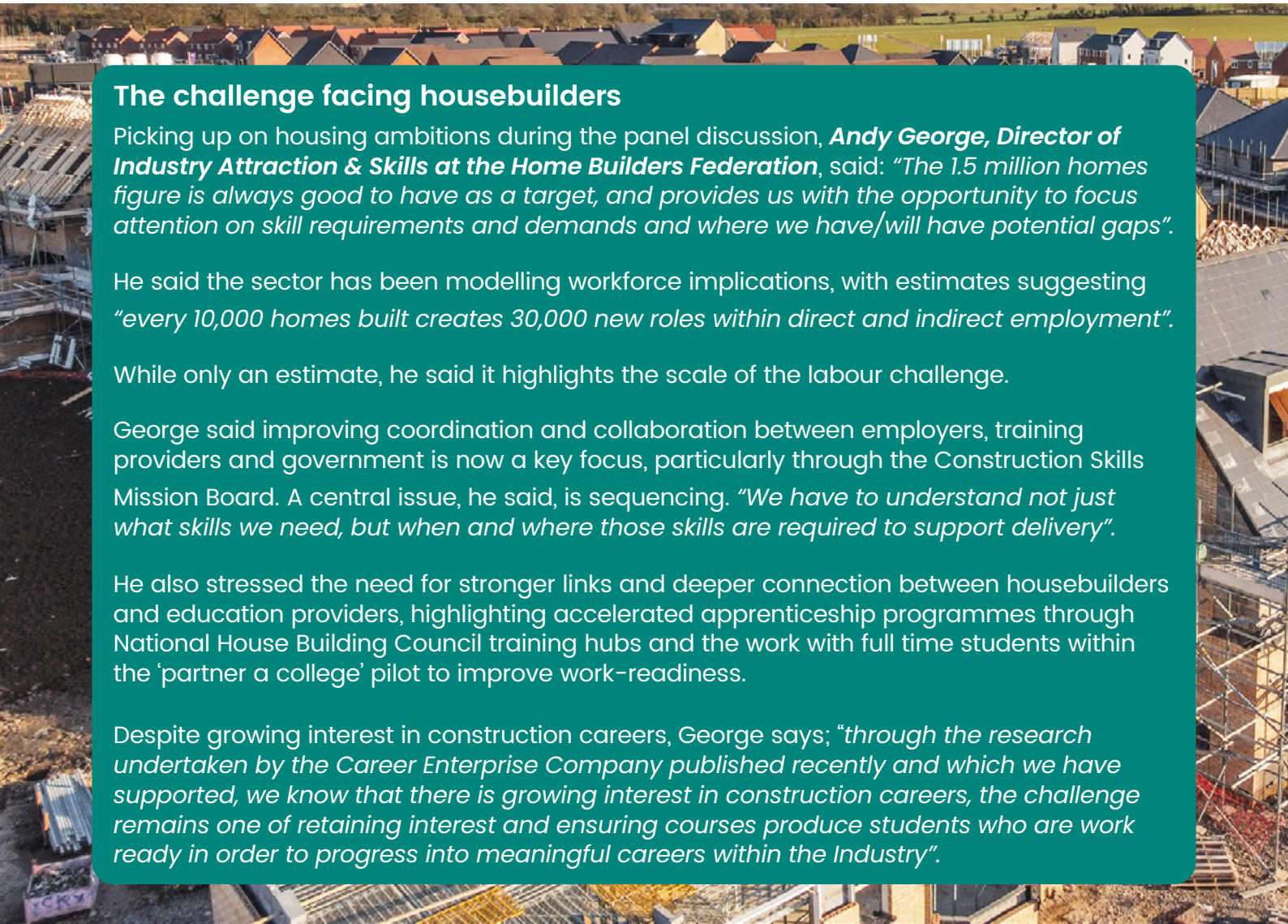
Current data sources, including carding systems, HM Revenue and Customs records and Office for National Statistics surveys, provide only partial visibility. Farmer's vision is a digital workforce inventory built around competency passporting: a live, dynamic system creating a unified view of workforce capability, which he said aligned with Skills England objectives.

Preparing for disruption

Farmer identified several forces reshaping workforce planning: AI, generational change, policy reform and product innovation. AI is already changing professional services and will reshape productivity, job design and competency requirements.

Research by Redrow and others, he said, suggested growing interest among Gen Z in trades and site-based roles, driven by concerns over university debt, economic risk and the impact of AI on white-collar careers. This signals a potential reversal in perceptions of skilled trade careers. However, this could create pressure on professional and technical roles if younger workers perceive white-collar professions as under threat from AI.

The implication, he said, is clear: workforce planning cannot be static. It must become a live, dynamic system capable of testing scenarios and adjusting in real time.



The challenge facing housebuilders

Picking up on housing ambitions during the panel discussion, ***Andy George, Director of Industry Attraction & Skills at the Home Builders Federation***, said: *"The 1.5 million homes figure is always good to have as a target, and provides us with the opportunity to focus attention on skill requirements and demands and where we have/will have potential gaps".*

He said the sector has been modelling workforce implications, with estimates suggesting *"every 10,000 homes built creates 30,000 new roles within direct and indirect employment".*

While only an estimate, he said it highlights the scale of the labour challenge.

George said improving coordination and collaboration between employers, training providers and government is now a key focus, particularly through the Construction Skills Mission Board. A central issue, he said, is sequencing. *"We have to understand not just what skills we need, but when and where those skills are required to support delivery".*

He also stressed the need for stronger links and deeper connection between housebuilders and education providers, highlighting accelerated apprenticeship programmes through National House Building Council training hubs and the work with full time students within the 'partner a college' pilot to improve work-readiness.

Despite growing interest in construction careers, George says; "*through the research undertaken by the Career Enterprise Company published recently and which we have supported, we know that there is growing interest in construction careers, the challenge remains one of retaining interest and ensuring courses produce students who are work ready in order to progress into meaningful careers within the Industry".*

3. Building blocks for data-driven planning?

Building Block 1: how the Construction Workforce Outlook underpins strategic workforce planning

If Farmer set out the case for strategic workforce planning, the practical question is how the industry begins to build it. At the centre of that answer is the Construction Workforce Outlook (CWO).

Speaking as project manager for the model, ***Tim Lyne*** described the CWO as a key analytical foundation for understanding future labour demand. Produced by Oxford Economics on behalf of the Construction Industry Training Board, the model links forecasts of construction output to employment demand across trades, professions and managerial roles.

The CWO provides a structured view of how demand across housing, infrastructure and repair and maintenance translates into workforce requirements, while also estimating replacement demand from retirement and occupational change.

Lyne said the model is evolving beyond its historic reliance on official statistics, particularly the Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey data, by integrating project-level intelligence.

A major development has been the inclusion of infrastructure pipeline data from the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), providing information on future projects, location, timing and value.

"The pipeline's scope is restricted to infrastructure projects, resulting in incomplete coverage of the wider construction landscape", Lyne said. To help address this, the CWO also draws on project data from Glenigan covering residential and commercial activity.

Together, these sources improve visibility of future demand, but do not yet provide a unified picture of the construction economy.

Lyne acknowledged that no single dataset could capture the sector's full complexity. Instead, the model relies on triangulation, combining official statistics, project pipelines and macroeconomic forecasts to build a coherent view of likely future demand.

Looking ahead, the CWO is expected to evolve further as data quality improves. Lyne acknowledged that construction data remains fragmented and inconsistent: for now, its value lies not in perfect prediction, but in providing a structured framework for better workforce planning.

> *Historical evidence informs our modelling assumptions, but forward-looking decisions require consideration of emerging risks, structural shifts, and evolving market conditions.*
>
> **Tim Lyne, Oxford Economics**

Building Block 2: a new Construction Jobs Plan

The Government is due to unveil a new Construction Jobs Plan in summer 2026, as ministers and industry leaders seek to address labour and skills issues across the sector and improve capacity to deliver major infrastructure, retrofit and housing commitments.

The plan, part of the UK's industrial strategy, is intended to bring together skills, employment and industry collaboration into a more coordinated workforce approach.

Speaking about the work underway, ***Karen Wood, who leads on construction skills and labour markets at the Department for Business and Trade***, said while there are *"significant infrastructure and built environment commitments"* from the Government, alongside substantial private investment, the sector is *"currently in a very challenging situation"* and needs a more joined-up response.

That work is taking place against a backdrop of major policy and regulatory change. Wood pointed to the Building Safety Act 2022, which is reshaping competence requirements, alongside the Government's £625 million construction skills package and the work of the Construction Skills Mission Board.

Wood said the Construction Jobs Plan is focused on three broad areas: understanding the scale of the workforce challenge, mapping what government is already doing on skills and labour markets, and assessing where industry itself is investing and taking action.

A key part of that first strand has been building a better picture of future demand. This includes not only visible infrastructure pipelines, but retrofit and housebuilding programmes that often sit outside conventional forecasting. The aim is to understand what is coming and the sequencing of work. *"This is vital if employers are to have confidence to invest in skills and recruitment"*, she said.

The plan is structured around four themes: skills, hiring and employment, good jobs, and industry collaboration.

On skills, Wood said there is already *"a lot of activity going on"*, including apprenticeships, T Levels and bootcamps, alongside new measures such as the Youth Guarantee and changes to the Growth and Skills Levy. But she stressed workforce planning must include both new entrants and the existing workforce.

On hiring and employment, Wood said construction's fragmented business model, with large numbers of small businesses and self-employed workers, makes workforce planning more complex. While apprenticeships remain a major route into the sector, she noted, *"you have to be employed to be an apprentice"*.

The 'good jobs' strand will focus on workforce conditions, career progression, retention and embedding new competence frameworks into the skills system. Industry collaboration, she said, will be critical, particularly in bringing smaller supply-chain firms into long-term workforce planning. Wood also pointed to gaps in training infrastructure, with Industry Training Boards not covering all parts of construction, particularly building services and electrical work.

With the Construction Jobs Plan, Wood said the immediate task is to better coordinate the breadth of workforce activity already underway across government and industry.

Building Block 3: Skills England looks to data and faster training models to reshape construction workforce planning

Picking up on themes raised by Karen Wood around coordination and workforce planning, ***Jonathan Mitchell, Deputy Director, Construction, Skills England***, said better market intelligence and more flexible training routes will be critical if construction is to respond effectively to future skills demand.

Responding to a question from Mark Farmer on what 'good' workforce intelligence could look like by 2030, Mitchell said the immediate challenge for Skills England is to build a system that makes better use of data to shape decisions for both government and industry.

Mitchell said construction faces unique workforce pressures, but the Government also has resource constraints, meaning interventions have to be carefully targeted to deliver the *"maximum bang for buck"*.

That, he argued, will only happen through a stronger partnership with industry. But unlike previous models of employer engagement, Mitchell said the next phase has to be more evidence-led. *"Much of that work depends on really, really good data and intelligence exchange"*.

Mitchell said one of the biggest weaknesses in the current system is not the absence of data, but the failure to bring it together in a usable form. Construction already generates large amounts of workforce and labour market data, but it remains fragmented.

Skills England has already begun using multiple datasets to map future construction demand against existing training provision, including apprenticeships and occupational standards. The aim is to identify *"early demand signals"* and respond faster.

Better data, Mitchell argued, can help identify where occupations may be displaced or where capacity is being freed up, allowing workers to be reskilled rather than lost to the industry. But he warned that data alone will not solve the problem. Skills England also has a role in creating the *"right products"* for employers and training providers to act on.

Mitchell said the scale of the challenge will require construction to rethink some of its traditional approaches to training.

Instead, Skills England is looking at faster reskilling routes and more responsive forms of training to meet immediate demand while supporting longer-term workforce development. Mitchell said Skills England sees part of its role as helping shape that transition with industry, ensuring new approaches reflect the *"authentic needs of industry"*.

> *"While apprenticeships remain valuable, long-duration, familiar training models may not be the sole solution to future workforce pressures.*
>
> **Jonathan Mitchell, Skills England**

Case study: strategic workforce planning in UK electricity transmission

To meet net zero targets and the shift away from fossil fuels, the UK electricity transmission sector is undergoing a projected £80 billion investment programme between 2025 and 2035. In a presentation by ***Simon Rawlinson, Head of Strategic Research and Insight at Arcadis***, strategic workforce planning was presented as critical to delivering this *"complete rewiring of the UK"* energy system.

Rawlinson framed the challenge as both a scale and skills problem, particularly within high-voltage transmission infrastructure, including converter stations, overhead lines and associated civil engineering works. These projects require a highly specialised workforce, from engineers and project managers to overhead line erectors and survey teams.

A key difficulty identified was the absence of reliable baseline data on available skilled workforce capacity. To address this, Arcadis developed a bottom-up modelling approach using Construction Workforce Outlook data, recalibrated to approximate transmission-specific labour requirements. The research was supported by contractor J. Murphy & Sons, which works extensively in the sector.

The analysis revealed several critical insights. While the absolute workforce requirement appeared small relative to UK construction overall, it represented a disproportionate increase in niche skill groups. For example, tower erection roles required an increase of 1,200 workers over baseline availability.

Skills shortages were also highly concentrated in engineering and design roles, with the sector needing to compete with sectors such as rail and water.

Workforce ramp-up timing also emerged as a major issue. Delays in planning and approvals meant early recruitment surges risked misalignment between labour supply and project delivery, leaving contractors exposed. Rawlinson also highlighted training constraints, noting skilled trades require extensive on-site mentoring, limiting the speed at which new workers can be developed. He added, *"keeping the expansion of workload versus existing workload running together in parallel is really difficult"*.

He concluded, *"I think you do need to get right down to the skills level of an industry to be able to do successful strategic workforce planning. That is very difficult to do. We were incredibly lucky in having an industry partner who really understood what was going on in their sector"*.

4. AI and the impact on recruitment and a warning on over-reliance

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as one of the defining uncertainties in strategic workforce planning, raising major questions not only about how work is delivered, but how the built environment attracts, trains and retains talent.

Across the sector, the debate is no longer about whether AI will change professional roles, but how businesses, educators and policymakers respond in a way that protects standards while preparing for a very different future workforce.

That challenge was brought into sharp focus by ***Peter Rolton, Executive Chairman of Rolton***, who warned against over-reliance on technology at the expense of human expertise and professional accountability.

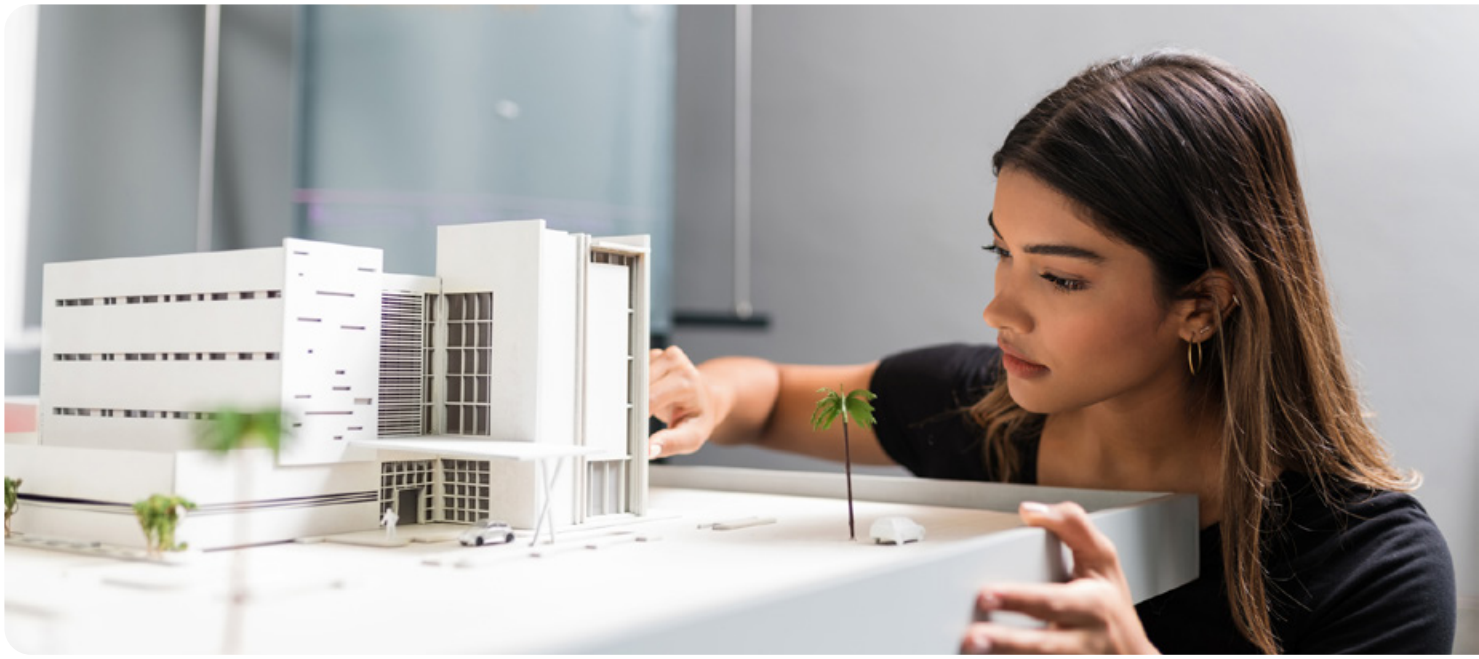
Rolton said clients appoint consultants and designers expecting *"a team of professionals who are knowledgeable and experienced"* with the qualifications and ability to deliver work with *"reasonable skill, care and diligence"*, a responsibility he noted is enshrined in law. While digital tools have long supported design under human supervision, he said AI is beginning to shift that balance by taking on a more autonomous role. For example, software can already generate layouts for housing estates, roads and drainage systems at the touch of a button, dramatically accelerating design processes.

But with that efficiency comes new risk. Rolton warned that AI-generated outputs raise difficult questions around liability, particularly in a post-Grenfell Tower fire environment where professional indemnity insurance is under greater scrutiny. Even if AI produces the design, he stressed, responsibility still sits with the professional signing it off, leaving businesses exposed if mistakes are made.

That makes experienced oversight more critical than ever. *"You have to be able to make the correct judgement across it to know whether it is wrong or right"*, Rolton said, warning that decades of experience and professional judgement cannot simply be automated away. In high-risk disciplines such as structural engineering and architecture, where errors can have catastrophic consequences, he argued that professional pathways and rigorous standards remain non-negotiable.

Rolton's concern extends beyond liability to the long-term shape of the workforce. If firms automate too much at the entry level, he warned, they risk reducing opportunities for younger professionals to gain practical experience, creating a future skills vacuum as senior professionals retire.

> *We must keep proper professional pathways. Whatever else happens with AI, professionals have to be professionals, they have to have the knowledge, and they have to be able to take responsibility for their actions.*
>
> **Peter Rolton, Rolton**



Lynda Rawsthorne, Head of Government Property Profession at the Cabinet Office, said the Government is equally aware of the risk AI poses to entry-level opportunities. She warned that securing the crucial first job is already becoming harder for those leaving further education, and said the sector will pay in the future if it fails to bring through new talent and build expertise early.

Rawsthorne said the Government is actively investing in future capability, with apprentices making up just over 6% of its 7,600-strong property profession workforce. She said work is underway to expand digital and sustainability skills, while mapping what capabilities will be needed over the next five years. She also pointed to the scale of the public estate. This is worth more than £200 billion, with annual running costs of over £20 billion and a maintenance backlog approaching £50 billion, as a major opportunity to shape workforce development through procurement, social value and early engagement with schools.

The discussion then turned to what this means for education and training providers, with Mark Farmer questioning how the sector ensures professional and technical skills evolve alongside technology rather than being displaced by its adoption.

Professor Ashley Wheaton, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Built Environment, argued that the impact of AI and technology goes beyond updating course content and requires a fundamental rethink of professional and educational pathways into the industry.

"We are going to have to find far more innovative models of both professional and educational pathways into our industry", he said, warning that traditional training models are too slow and too rigid for the scale of change now facing the sector.

With 3.8 million people employed across the built environment, including technical, legal, financial and operational roles, Wheaton said workforce planning needs to extend far beyond trades. Around half of that workforce sits in professional and technical roles, yet policy interventions remain heavily focused on site-based skills.

For Wheaton, the solution lies in shifting the focus from qualifications to capability. *"We need to wean ourselves off the notion of qualifications and really start to talk about competence"*, he said, arguing for more modular, flexible pathways that recognise skills as they are developed rather than only at the end of lengthy qualifications. He also stressed that AI makes upskilling the existing workforce just as important as attracting new entrants.

5. Strategic workforce planning: 10 key conclusions

1 Strategic workforce planning is now essential, not optional

Strategic workforce planning is critical because it shifts the industry away from assumption-led decisions towards evidence-based delivery. It helps align workforce capacity with real project timelines, regional demand and wider economic priorities. Done well, it leads to better use of labour, stronger policy decisions and greater confidence in investment.

Improving workforce outcomes requires better coordination between employers, government, education providers and regulators. No single part of the system can solve this alone.

That includes strengthening early-career pathways, improving links between employers and education, and using public sector procurement and estates more strategically to support skills development. Skills, employment and industry planning also need to be better aligned through more joined-up workforce strategies, rather than operating in silos.

2 Move from skills crisis thinking to workforce system thinking

The industry needs to go beyond general talk of skills shortages and be clearer about the real issues. Workforce shortages and competency gaps are not the same thing and need different solutions. A system-wide approach also means putting as much focus on upskilling and reskilling existing workers as on bringing in new entrants. The current workforce is central to productivity and delivery, not secondary to future recruitment.

Many organisations are focused on immediate delivery pressures, which leaves little space to plan for longer-term workforce needs. As a result, future skills gaps are often not identified early enough. In some cases, regulatory and governance systems also reinforce short-term thinking, making it harder for the industry to plan properly.

3 Planning must be demand-led, not aspiration-led

Workforce planning should be based on what will actually be built, not just what is announced. Too often, investment pipelines overestimate what can be delivered because they don't fully reflect labour, funding or market constraints. A more realistic 'deliverable pipeline' is needed, taking account of workforce availability, sequencing of work and competition from other sectors.

4 Skills and workforce data should be joined up into a live system

There is plenty of workforce data available, but it is scattered across government, industry and training providers. The challenge is bringing it together in a usable way. The long-term aim should be a more joined-up, live view of the workforce, potentially including digital competency records, so skills, capacity and future demand can be tracked more clearly in real time.

5 The professional workforce needs equal focus alongside trades

Alongside the current emphasis on trades and site-based skills, there is a growing need to give much greater attention to professional and technical roles such as engineering, architecture and surveying. These roles are central to delivery but are often underplayed in workforce policy and funding priorities.

At the same time, AI is beginning to reshape how design and technical work is carried out. While its long-term impact is still uncertain, it is already changing workflows and productivity. However, it does not remove the need for professional judgement, accountability or oversight. If anything, it increases the importance of experienced professionals guiding and validating outputs, rather than reducing the need for them or limiting entry into the sector.

6 Industry initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion exist, but lack coordination and impact

Across the sector, there is no shortage of activity, with government, industry bodies and employers all running initiatives to improve inclusion and diversity. However, these efforts are often fragmented and lack impact. The issue is not a lack of effort, but a lack of coordination. Without better alignment, good initiatives risk duplicating work or failing to move the dial on system-wide workforce challenges and behaviours.

7 Programme competition is distorting workforce planning

Major infrastructure and construction programmes often compete for the same limited pool of labour. This competition is occurring across housing, energy, transport and utilities without enough coordination. The result is predictable bottlenecks in skills and capacity. Workforce planning needs to recognise cross-sector competition rather than treating each programme in isolation.

8 Workforce planning must be more granular and skills-based

Effective planning needs to go beyond broad job categories and focus on specific skills. Many of the most critical shortages sit at a detailed technical level that traditional occupational classifications don't capture. This means workforce planning needs to get closer to real skills demand, not just high-level job titles.

9 Training systems must become faster and more flexible

Traditional training routes, such as long-form apprenticeships, still have an important role but are not enough on their own. The sector needs a broader mix of approaches, including modular learning, faster retraining routes and more flexible programmes that can respond quickly to changes in demand.

At the same time, interest in construction careers is growing, particularly among younger people, with the sector beginning to improve its standing compared with industries such as retail and hospitality. However, 'absorbing' that interest into employment remains a challenge.

Stronger employer–education links will be key, particularly closer work with colleges to help make students work-ready. Clearer career pathways are also needed so interest in the sector leads to sustained participation, not just awareness.

10 Competence is becoming more important than qualifications

There is a growing shift towards recognising competence as it develops, rather than relying solely on qualifications at the end of long training pathways. A more flexible approach to recognising skills would allow people to progress faster, move between roles more easily and better reflect how capability is actually built in the workplace.

Acknowledgements

The **Built Environment Futures Assembly (BEFA)** is a powerful leadership forum for the built environment sector to build future-facing capacity, capability and competency through shared knowledge, learning and innovation. Supported by the University of the Built Environment, BEFA serves as a centre of excellence – a partnership focused on facilitating knowledge exchange, thought leadership, commissioning innovative projects and initiatives. It recognises and aggregates best practice for the built environment.

www.befa.org.uk

The **Construction Industry Council** is the representative forum for professional bodies, research organisations and specialist business associations in the construction industry. CIC uses expertise to shape a built environment that delivers a better society and a better world, bringing built environment professionals together - sharing a collective interest in enhancing the industry for a greater positive impact and contribution to society.

www.cic.org.uk

The **Construction Leadership Council** works in partnership with government and organisations of all sizes across the industry to ensure the construction sector has the voice, support and resilience needed to grow, improve productivity, attract and retain talent and successfully transition to net zero. Our vision is to lead a new era of delivery in the built environment.

www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk

ISBN 978-1-913800-14-7

Built Environment Futures Assembly
Horizons, 60 Queen's Road, Reading RG1 4BS

Construction Industry Council
The Building Centre, 26 Store Street, London WC1E 7BT

Construction Leadership Council
c/o Department for Business & Trade,
Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place, London SW1A 2DY