

# **All Party Parliamentary Group for the Roofing Industry**

## **November 2010**

### **Position paper and plan of action for the Group 2010/2011**

#### Introduction to the APPG for the Roofing Industry

Chairman – Rt Hon David Hanson MP

Vice-Chairmen – Baroness Maddock and Lord Davies of Coity

The APPG, advised by the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC), was established in 2005 to raise awareness of the roofing industry in Parliament, to improve training for roofers and associated sectors, and to provide higher standards of consumer protection. It has been re-established after the 2010 General Election. Key industry issues which were covered in the last parliamentary session were:

- Payment practices
- Rogue Traders
- Health and Safety
- Microgeneration
- Apprenticeships and training
- Heritage

#### **Meeting 1 - Health and safety**

##### Roofing Industry position

The NFRC closely monitors its members and has a 100% collection rate for health and safety statistics. The Federation has focused on slips and trips, leading to significant improvement. Despite providing 60% of the market by value there were no fatalities in NFRC companies in either 2008 or 2009. Government figures for fatalities and accidents are often misleading because all incidents on roofs have been attributed to roofing and roofers. The real problem is the presence and activity of contractors and individuals working at height without the health and safety training that roofers receive.

##### Pre-qualification questionnaires

There has been considerable growth in health and safety pre-qualification schemes over the past few years. Pre-qualification is designed to demonstrate contractors' health & safety capabilities and their eligibility to bid for contracts. However, the proliferation of pre-qualification schemes has increased the burdens on sub-contractors, whose clients often specify a *particular* pre-qualification scheme. The significant costs of assessment by multiple schemes have the potential to undermine the belief held by industry that health and safety adds value to a business.

The Government is set to consult on PAS91 – a standard pre-qualification questionnaire.

### Lord Young's report on Health and Safety

The Governments' position on Health and safety was recently laid out in a report published by Lord Young, the Prime Minister's adviser on health and safety law and practice. Entitled '*Common Sense, Common Safety*', the report proposes a series of policy recommendations aimed at improving the perception of health and safety in both the eyes of employers and the general public. Despite this, the report's recommendations are almost exclusively at reducing the burden on small businesses such as offices, shops and classrooms. By contrast, Lord Young asserts that while lamentably over-bureaucratic, the rules and regulations relating to construction, manufacturing, chemicals and nuclear industries, even farming should remain untouched.

There are suggestions that a self regulating policy might be used especially with the major contractors. This has some obvious advantages but there is also concern that such a policy could be used to just pass on the responsibility to the sub contractors via yet another pre-qualification scheme.

### **What to achieve?**

Pre-qualification questionnaires;

- Respond to the Government consultation and follow up with Civil Servants to encourage the introduction of such as scheme as speedily as possible
- Apply for Westminster Hall debate on the subject once the consultation period has closed
- Table an EDM on the introduction of an industry-wide standard pre-qualification questionnaire

### **Key Departments / contacts**

BIS

### Meeting 2 - Trustmark

#### **Roofing Industry position**

*TrustMark*, the Government endorsed standards certification for tradesmen, and the problem of cowboy builders have been constant themes since the Group's inception. The NFRC was awarded a TrustMark licence as an official scheme operator in 2005; the scheme now helps to bring 500,000 monthly hits to the NFRC website. It is currently accepted by 27 local authorities and scheme operators, with 12 more in discussion.

There is a duplication within BIS in that they oversee a similar scheme from a different section of the Department. *Buy with Confidence* allows consumers to rate tradesmen on work which they have done, rather than traders needing to comply with a set of minimum standards of practice (as outlined by the Trustmark scheme). Further to this there are a multitude of local authority schemes which are well intended but only muddy the water further. With the proliferation of rogue traders, it becomes even more important that there is a scheme for consumers which gives them the confidence that the tradesman in their home is competent.

The advent of the Green Deal could give great scope to rogue traders, especially in area such as roofing where it is difficult for the consumer to check work which has been carried out. Above all a commitment by Government to protect the consumer is confusing and lacks focus.

#### **What to achieve?**

- Raise the issue of the conflicting schemes and work with both to ensure that there is one Government-endorsed scheme which give the consumer confidence and ensures that standards are measured by industry representatives such as trade bodies.

#### **Key Departments / contacts**

BIS

#### Meeting 3 - Green Deal

The UK housing stock is responsible for approximately one quarter of the UK's carbon emissions - with the heating for non-domestic building accounting for around a further tenth. The majority of our building stock will therefore require some form of energy efficiency measure over the next two decades if we are to meet our legally binding carbon budget targets and set us on a path to 2050.

The Green deal is the Coalition Government's initiative to support the implementation of energy efficiency measures to households and businesses without needing to meet any upfront costs. This programme will be backed with a totally new finance mechanism designed around the needs of people and business.

#### **The legislative timetable**

The Queen's Speech on 25 May 2010 set out a provisional timetable to put in place the legal framework needed for Green Deal. The framework will be a key element of the Energy Bill due to be implemented in the first session of this parliament. It is anticipated that the Green Deal will be launched in Autumn 2012.

Late 2010 – Bill introduced into Parliament

Autumn 2011- Bill receives Royal Assent (depending on length of 1st Session)

Ahead of Autumn 2011 - officials will be developing thinking on secondary legislation with a view to drafting secondary legislation and formally consulting.

Early 2012 – secondary legislation laid in Parliament

Spring 2012 – detailed guidance prepared

Autumn 2012 – First Green Deals appear

#### **Roofing Industry position**

There is considerable scope for this scheme to be abused, and the NFRC firmly believe that irrespective of the arrangements to provide independent advice it is vital that qualified installers must be used for the Green Deal Scheme. This means the consumer has peace of mind that the work will be of a minimum standard, and for those who are fully-trained, the

work required is part of their everyday duties. For professionals, much of the work it is not that challenging and training is already included in NVQs.

### **What to achieve?**

- Engage with Greg Barker, Environment Minister at DECC, and invite him to the APPG Annual Lunch to speak about the Green Deal
- Examine the Bill when it is published and ensure that if there are areas of concern for the roofing industry, these are raised at all stages of the Bill
- Engage with Civil Servants at DECC who are working on the Bill

### **Key Departments / contacts**

DECC

### Meeting 4 - Apprenticeships

The NFRC has been closely involved in the Cross-Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force, which has given specialist contractors the opportunity to draw up proposed new guidance in 'contractor's language', specifically to meet industry needs.

### *College provision*

In terms of the roofing sector, there is considerable regional variation in the current provision of relevant FE courses and facilities. In Scotland, for example, there are several suitable colleges but in the south of England there are very few. Training for industrial roofing is not completed in colleges at all. The equipment and facilities needed for training in the roofing disciplines are considerable. However, several companies have excellent facilities – incentivising them to provide apprenticeships is a much more efficient way of providing these valuable opportunities in many parts of the country. Too much distinction is made between different means of training for apprenticeships and there are different levels of funding which are always skewed towards colleges. This is not meeting the current requirement and will not meet any future initiatives.

### *Parity for over-19s*

Full funding for those aged 19 and over – not just for under-19s – is essential. The roofing industry welcomes more mature candidates for training – especially in industrial roofing – and would like this reflected in the Government's provision for apprentices. The APPG and NFRC worked closely with several front-benchers on the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act and will continue to work for a better apprenticeships system.

Whilst in Opposition, the Conservative Party committed to parity of funding for all ages and to direct help to employers. There have, as yet, been no firm proposals on either. This is urgently needed – there is no point in training apprentices if nobody employs them!

The APPG welcomes the announcement in the October 2010 CSR that funding for adult apprenticeships will be increased by £250 million a year by 2014-15.

With cuts in government expenditure and a dramatic decrease in levy collected by Construction Skills there is an urgent need to look at better ways of increasing apprentice

take up rates. It is our view that this will only be possible with the adoption of some form of much more flexible approach to the different trades within Construction.

#### **What to achieve?**

- Monitor changes which are being made, such as the abolition of Train to Gain and ensure that funding is used in an efficient and sensible manner.
- All Funding for Roofing apprentices to be handled by one agency (ConstructionSkills) working with the NFRC to set and achieve targets. (there are no realistic targets for the trade at the current time).
- Direct funding to those who employ apprentices and let them ensure the correct training rather than fund agencies to try to achieve the same.

#### **Key Departments / contacts**

BIS

#### Other areas to watch

- Payment practices
- The drive towards localism and the effect on building regulations
- Feed-in tariffs for renewable heat and PV
- The possible privatisation of ConstructionSkills
- Competent Persons Scheme for Roofwork