

All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Roofing Industry Apprenticeship Meeting

Monday 25th April 2016
4pm, Room P, PCH

Present:

Rt Hon David Hanson MP
Baroness Sharp
James Talman (NFRC)
Livia Williams (NFRC)
Michelle Hammerton (Lakesmere)
Scott Keegan (Bracknell Roofing)
Ian Muddiman (SIKA Group)
Gordon Jenkins (CSCS)
Anna Wolffe (Secretariat)
Ben Goldsborough (Office of Rt Hon David Hanson MP)

David Hanson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies were recorded.

James Talman gave the Group an update on the roofing industry. He stated that the increase in standards meant that productivity was on the up and defects down. The UK is a world leader when it comes to standards in construction and has a positive message to get out.

The roofing industry would like to see a greater recognition from the Government of the investment it is making in training, especially in relation to public sector work. Construction 2025, whilst welcomed, is not that robust a document and if the Government became a greater champion of skills development it is felt that this would filter through to the private sector.

CITB return approximately 75% of the Levy money that it collected to re-invest in training. This translates to about £3.5m but if you take into account the investment from individual firms on top of that, the total industry investment in training is about double that figure.

Michelle Hammerton introduced Lakesmere and stated that one of the company's biggest problems was that the Apprenticeship Levy was too age-restrictive. They needed wider support for a bigger age group. They run a programme with local schools which would not be supported by the Government scheme, but is supported by the CITB Levy. There is not the freedom to create their own training programme, nor to upskill where it is necessary amongst the workforce.

Livia Williams added that because colleges that provide specialist training are small in number it is difficult for companies to access all the necessary training.

Ian Muddiman stated that SIKA was one of the largest manufacturers of roofing products in the UK and they only sell their products to trained contractors. Sometimes training for one product can take up to a week. The company also monitors installation and progress on the building site before they issue any product guarantee. Whilst their training is recognised it does not have the full backing of Government. SIKA do charge for their training because they have no access to CITB Levy money – part of this is passed onto contractors and part of the cost is borne by the company.

James Talman added that the NFRC were looking to collaborate with the Builders Merchant Federation which should support programmes such as SIKA's training.

Scott Keegan stated that as much as his company would like to take on more apprentices (current level standing at 5) they could not ensure that they would be able to devote the required time and resources to facilitate the training. He felt that another Levy would put off SMEs.

David Hanson asked what representations had been made to BIS over Levy concerns. NFRC concerns have been made via CITB who are in regular discussion with BIS. A discussion developed on the future of the CITB Levy and what indications the industry had been given regarding transition, funding levels and how CITB would manage without the Levy funding.

Concern was expressed about the impact on SMEs, particularly as roofing training is expensive and the Apprenticeship Levy will only cover approximately one third of the training costs.

Gordon Jenkins emphasised the need for strategic direction from central government regarding which standard it requires as perhaps the largest procurer of construction. He mentioned that the Construction Leadership Council had clearly supported NOS and NVQ, however there was differing levels of standards required for trailblazers.. Focus on standards across all the four home nations is extremely important and CSCS believes that there must be a national standard to which apprenticeships should adhere to, including trailblazers.

Agreed actions:

- Letter to Nick Boles as responsible Minister outlining concerns over the transition from the CITB Levy to Apprenticeship levy, looking for strong guidance from Government. Secondly, wider recognition of quality standards will be raised. A meeting will be requested with the Minister.
- Members of the Group will table written and oral parliamentary questions highlighting issues related to CITB Levy, transition arrangements, national standards and benching marking and what action Government is taking to support efforts by the industry to ensure trained workforce
- After the elections on 5th May, NFRC will ask their members to write to AMs and MSPs for clarification on how the Welsh and Scottish Governments will operate the Levy and to seek clarification on standards. Strong liaison with all regional governments will be requested.