

Strategic Objectives and Executive Summary

Introduction

Skills issues and requirements are central to the home building industry's ability to rise to the challenges it faces in the twenty first century.

Much is already being done to meet skills needs, but this activity needs to be better communicated. This strategy seeks to do so. In addition, it sets out the ways in which the Home Builders Federation, as the representative body for the industry, will look to assist and add value to the initiatives being undertaken by its member companies.

Strategic objectives

The overall aim of the strategy is to establish a framework that can focus and express a clear sense of purpose for the HBF and its members, enabling them to work together effectively to promote necessary skills throughout the industry's workforce.

The strategy's core objectives are:

- The promotion of high quality career entry to home building in craft, professional and managerial occupations

- Achieving appropriate recognition of home building as a positive career choice in relevant school, college, university and professional courses and materials
- Developing co-operation and collaborative initiatives with relevant professional, educational and other bodies which have a significant role to play in delivering the skills the industry will need in future
- Ensuring an effective and powerful voice for the home building industry in the further development and implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction and the provision of the necessary funding to support this
- Ensuring appropriate representation on relevant consultative bodies so that national skills initiatives for construction take proper account of the specific requirements in home building
- Contributing proactively to future skills forecasting for the industry in partnership with CITB-ConstructionSkills
- Supporting and facilitating the Major Home Builder Group skills initiatives to:
 - increase the number of training places for skilled trades
 - seek a fully qualified workforce by the end of 2010

- develop with ConstructionSkills a new flexible qualifications structure for the management of house building developments. With a view to extending take up of these initiatives by other home builders
- Communicating best practice
- Developing further dialogue with CITB-ConstructionSkills and other key stakeholders to influence future strategic thinking on skills provision for home building

Summary of proposed actions

The strategy will:

- Build web-based resources via the HBF site and otherwise to promote career entry to home building
- Develop existing HBF and member company links and relationships with universities
- Deepen links with relevant professional bodies to ensure appropriate course coverage and mutual recognition arrangements
- Explore the scope for active collaboration with the work of the Academy for Sustainable Communities
- Further develop the effectiveness of both HBF and member company relationships with CITB-ConstructionSkills to ensure skills for Construction can best add value for all parties
- Contribute to the development of the new Specialised Diploma for Construction and the Built Environment due to be introduced in 2008
- Work to enhance the effectiveness of traditional apprenticeship entry to the industry and explore new means of bringing skilled trades trainees into the industry
- Co-ordinate and resolve implementation issues relating to the Major Home Builders Group Qualifying the Workforce Initiative and contribute to policy-making on the delivery of vocational qualifications to support this
- Review and pursue the need for changes to relevant vocational qualifications for managerial and professional occupations in the industry as well as for skilled trades
- Seek suitable provision for education and training in respect of Modern Methods of Construction and other aspects of innovation in the industry
- Consider and pursue any skills issues relating to migrant workers
- Develop means for increased engagement with member companies on skills issues

Plan of Action

Introduction

The HBF recognises the vital role that a workforce with the right skills has to play in ensuring home builders can deliver the product and service required by twenty first century consumers. This strategy sets out the HBF's detailed proposals for working with its members and CITB-ConstructionSkills to promote the entry of suitably skilled individuals to the industry in future and the provision of training and other measures to achieve necessary skills in the existing workforce.

Key drivers and considerations

The strategy aims to ensure a coherent approach to meeting future skills requirements. Key considerations and drivers in achieving such a coherent vision are:

- 1 Recommendation 34 of the March 2004 Barker Report on Housing Supply. This asked the HBF and CITB-ConstructionSkills to work together to substantially increase the take up of apprenticeships, to consider investment in workforce training, and to look at the skills needed for modern methods of construction.
- 2 The findings of the September 2005 study commissioned from Professor Michael Ball of Reading University by HBF and CITB-ConstructionSkills to provide a better understanding of the future labour and skills requirements resulting from a significant increase in housing output in line with the Recommendations of the Barker Report.
- 3 The skills challenges that result from the increasing complexity of the industry.
- 4 The need to address the skills, education and training requirements associated with the use of modern methods of construction – including considering the proposals emerging in this area from the multi-stakeholder group established to consider the Barker Report's Recommendation 33 on identifying obstacles to investment in modern methods of construction.
- 5 The importance of skills for achieving the continued improvements in business efficiency, the quality and design of new homes and levels of customer satisfaction that a future market-responsive home building industry will require to be successful.
- 6 The need to maintain and improve the industry's safety record.
- 7 The skills initiatives already being taken by many leading companies and HBF's wish to encourage other firms to participate in these.

- 8 The importance of ensuring a coherent message on skills and training requirements in the home building industry in order that the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction can take full account of these requirements.
- 9 The related need for funding arrangements supporting the Sector Skills Agreement to be tailored to the needs of home builders.
- 10 The need to ensure that suitably skilled migrant workers from EU and EEA countries and from other nations can contribute fully to the industry's success and receive the advice they require to verify their skills and achieve necessary health and safety standards.

The proposals in this strategy are based on giving due weight to all these factors.

Professor Ball's study -

"The Labour Needs of Extra Housing Output: Can the Housebuilding Industry Cope"

Professor Ball's study, published in September 2005, requires specific mention as its findings have important overall implications for the content and direction of this strategy.

Professor Ball's chief conclusions are that:

- 1 Due to likely productivity gains associated with the business climate necessary for a significant increase in home building and associated commercial drivers, labour supply is unlikely to represent a barrier to the expansion of the industry.
- 2 There are nevertheless identified skills and training needs:
 - There will be a need for more new entrants to come into home building
 - For trades, the study identified a particular need for more bricklayers, followed by wood trades, plumbers and painters. Additional labour is required in other trades as well. There is also a need to identify sub-specialisms within each trade that focus on the skills specifically required in home building.
 - Many more site managers and site supervisors will be needed. While many may continue to come up through the trades, in future more might come via college or university routes as the share of young people passing through further and higher education increases and as

the skills requirements of site management grow. Current provision for site managers probably needs significant expansion.

- Certain professional staff, particularly quantity surveyors, are currently in short supply
- There is a need for a greater focus on home building in construction courses and in professional groups' training.
- These findings have informed the proposals in this strategy. Professor Ball's findings have also been communicated to key Government Departments and other stakeholders to inform dialogue with them on skills issues.

Specific actions and proposals

(1) Promoting entry to home building

Web resources

HBF and CITB-ConstructionSkills recognise that web-based resources are critical to the effective promotion of career entry and resultant opportunities in home building. Much is already being done in this sphere and the strategy seeks to build on and enhance existing plans. Particular proposed actions are to:

- 1 Add to and improve existing case study material on careers in home building and on the range of roles typically involved in the industry. It is proposed to establish a time-limited working group of HBF members to consider existing case studies and to commission any new material needed to meet identified future requirements. Case study material could be used on both the HBF website and on CITB-ConstructionSkills' "Bconstructive" site aimed at young people.
- 2 Ensure that the respective requirements of school leavers, teachers, careers advisors and college and university students for careers and related information are separately considered with appropriate materials being provided for each group via properly structured web resources.
- 3 Ensure HBF develops its potential as a portal for careers-related inquiries by developing clear and functional web-links to both member companies' own careers sites and websites run by CITB-ConstructionSkills and other relevant bodies.
- 4 Ensure that all existing and future careers and training guides, curriculum resources and other useful information is made available on and promoted via the HBF website.

- 5 Consider the creation of effective virtual networks for sharing experience and seeking advice on specified subject areas via the HBF website.
- 6 Create a database/ facility for e-based communications with careers advisors and teachers.

Links and relationships with universities

Professor Ball's study has demonstrated the need for home builders to recruit sufficient numbers of graduates in construction and key professional disciplines in future.

It is proposed that the most effective way of promoting awareness of home building career opportunities will be for HBF and its members to develop long-term relationships on behalf of the industry with a comparatively small number of universities that run courses and have student complements well aligned with the business context in home building.

A provisional list of universities that HBF should explore working with is:

- 1 Nottingham Trent (existing relationship)
- 2 Reading
- 3 Manchester
- 4 Newcastle
- 5 University of the West of England
- 6 University of Wales
- 7 Leeds
- 8 Imperial College, London
- 9 London South Bank

There are a number of ways in which HBF in partnership with its member companies could develop relationships with such universities and their student populations. Specific proposals are to:

- 1 Sponsor and help organise debates or events based around themes or topics of interest to students and also relevant to the business context in home building – for example, on sales and marketing, the adoption of innovation, how to meet the sustainability challenge, contemporary issues relating to the operation of the planning system. Maintain a panel of potential speakers and participants in such events.
- 2 Investigate the scope for HBF to sponsor prizes on particular subjects for annual entry by students.
- 3 Assist students' integrated team projects, possibly both via awarding prizes and by providing access for students to agreed contacts in member companies.
- 4 Facilitate home builders' involvement in the Inspire undergraduate scholarships scheme.

Links with relevant professional bodies

There is both a need to ensure that the courses and qualifications provided or supported by key professional bodies take better account of home building issues and for those working in relevant roles in home building to have means of assurance that home building is a career choice properly compatible with what they see as their professional status and role.

HBF will hold discussions with bodies including RICS, CIOB, RTPI and ICE to explore the basis on which those working in home building can also be recognised as members of these bodies on an appropriate basis. Such mutual recognition arrangements should be of benefit to all concerned and in turn provide a driver for better coverage of home building in professional training.

Working with the Academy for Sustainable Communities

Home builders have an important part to play in creating modern sustainable communities.

Developers are one of the core groups that the Academy has identified it needs to work with. Equally developers have identified a need for many of the other professionals and actors involved in delivering sustainable communities to have a better understanding of the home building industry context and to promote more constructive means of problem-solving with them. Improved mutual understanding and status between groups would facilitate career entry and positive career moves across and between professions and roles.

HBF will hold discussions with the Academy to explore how it can facilitate such improvements by working with its members.

Working directly with CITB-ConstructionSkills

It is proposed to develop the following specific co-operative actions on the promotion of career entry with CITB-ConstructionSkills:

- 1 HBF will seek the incorporation of suitable case study and curriculum material co-ordinated by HBF with its members in CITB-ConstructionSkills' resources and websites.
- 2 CITB-ConstructionSkills will consider what existing curriculum pack material could be promoted by HBF via its website and otherwise.
- 3 HBF will discuss with CITB-ConstructionSkills the scope for organising an annual event for HBF member companies to encourage those companies recruiting graduates to participate in the Construction Ambassadors scheme.

- 4 HBF will work with its members to ensure that the development of the new National Skills Academy for Construction takes full account of the home building industry's requirements.
- 5 Through CITB-ConstructionSkills, the HBF will explore the scope for home builders to work in partnership with other, specialist, sectors within the construction industry to help provide an interchangeable and flexible modern skills base in construction that will help assist home builders in meeting their skills requirements.

(2) Ensuring an effective and powerful voice for home building in the development of skills provision through the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction and other important initiatives

ConstructionSkills is one of the first Sector Skills Councils to have adopted a Sector Skills Agreement. HBF was involved in the preparation of the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction which includes coverage of the skills initiatives adopted by the Major Home Builders Group in November 2004.

The philosophy of the Sector Skills Agreement is that its development and implementation should be fully responsive to employer requirements.

The policy and commercial context of home building is different to that in wider construction. An improved national housing supply has become a priority. The policy objectives associated with developing sustainable communities have, however, resulted in a complex climate and regulatory framework. Within this climate, the industry is also selling homes to a mass consumer market with its own clear characteristics.

A vital component of this strategy is therefore the need for HBF to work closely with its membership to identify skills requirements and associated delivery issues and to represent these clearly and effectively to ConstructionSkills.

HBF will continue to develop active dialogue with its membership on the main skills issues of interest to home builders under the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction. Dialogue will be focused through the HBF Careers, Skills and Training Committee and soundings will also be taken via other national and regional groups. To complement such dialogue, the following steps will also be taken:

- HBF will ensure suitable HBF/member company representation on relevant consultative groups and the CITB-ConstructionSkills Board and Committee structure

- HBF will ask CITB-ConstructionSkills to consider whether it can provide account managers for at least major HBF member companies as a means of simplifying advice to them on the support and grant available and so provide incentives for training and skills investment by the industry
- HBF will also ask CITB-ConstructionSkills to provide an accessible general guide for use by HBF member companies summarising key responsibilities and contact points within CITB-ConstructionSkills

Construction and Built Environment

Specialised Diploma

The planned introduction of the new Specialised Diploma for Construction and the built Environment in 2008 will be a further major development affecting educational provision relating to career entry into home building at apprenticeship level and above.

HBF will work with its members to ensure that full account of home building requirements, opportunities and educational materials is taken into account in developing the new Diploma. It will also be necessary to ensure that the Diploma assists the current Major Home Builders Group initiatives on apprentices and a qualified workforce.

In addition the HBF will seek to ensure that the further development of the Built Environment GCSE provides appropriate coverage of home building.

Construction Qualifications Strategy

There is a parallel need to feed home building industry views and requirements in to the development of the new Construction Qualifications Strategy.

(3) Apprenticeships

New Initiatives

In its announcement of three new skills initiatives in November 2004, the Major Home Builder Group of HBF members recognised the need to increase the level of young people entering the industry to provide a skilled workforce for the future. In addition to its existing commitment to traditional apprenticeship training the companies have been working with CITB-ConstructionSkills to develop an effective new initiative with their subcontractor supply chain that would significantly increase the number of training places for skilled trades within the house building industry.

Discussions with CITB-ConstructionSkills have so far identified two possible new ways of bringing trainees into the industry both of which are subject to suitable funding being available via public programmes.

- 1 In the short term, the major companies have agreed to run up to 6 pilot schemes with CITB- ConstructionSkills that would provide 12 months' employment experience leading to a NVQ2 qualification for students just completing their Intermediate Construction Award at college. The aim is that each pilot would comprise about 20 trainees, with the companies providing the placements on a shared basis between them. CITB-ConstructionSkills would help organise interviews and other administrative arrangements and provide a measure of financial support.
- 2 For the somewhat longer term, discussions have been held via a working group of HBF members and CITB-ConstructionSkills to see if a new Student Apprenticeship model could be developed in addition to recruitment via the traditional apprenticeship route. The working proposal considered is for a "sandwich course" structure involving a clear element of structured work experience within the first year of a college course. A number of practical issues for the parties involved have been identified and still need to be resolved before it can be established whether this model can be tested.

The proposed pilot schemes for ICA students are still in the process of being organised. Subject to the outcome of arrangements for and the results of such pilots, the future of both this initiative and the idea of a "sandwich course" route will be dependent on the future availability of appropriate funding via ConstructionSkills. This has yet to be confirmed. HBF will work closely with the companies, ConstructionSkills and Government to ensure that both practical and funding issues are fully addressed.

Traditional Apprenticeships

Home building companies are also continuing to recruit apprenticeships via the traditional route backed by grant from CITB-ConstructionSkills.

As a result of the industry's efforts, in the period from 2002 to 2004 the number of apprenticeships in home building increased from 2.6 to 3.7 per hundred workers, measured across the workforce as a whole (that is, including subcontractors as well as direct employees). In the same period the equivalent figures for all construction were 4.3 and 4.4.

Home builders have therefore made significant progress in increasing the number of apprentices in the industry in recent years and so approaching the general industry level of training mentioned by the Barker Report (paragraph 6.38). In fact in terms of direct employees alone, the position in home building is now the same as in construction as a whole with 5.8 apprenticeships per hundred workers in 2004.

HBF will continue to discuss with CITB-ConstructionSkills means of increasing the flow of trainees to the industry via the traditional apprenticeship route.

Subject to the outcome of discussions and initial experience on the possible new models of apprenticeship, HBF will also in the future seek to extend the take up of new routes of apprenticeship across its membership as a whole

(4) CSCS and the Qualified Workforce Initiative

In November 2004 the Major Home Builder Group members of the HBF also recognised the need to have a qualified workforce and decided to join the Qualified Workforce Initiative. The companies are now working with CITB-ConstructionSkills to promote the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) within the industry through their sub-contract base, with the aim of having a fully carded workforce by the end of 2007.

To this end the companies collectively wrote to all their sub-contractors in July 2005 to advise them that by December 2007 they will expect construction operatives on their sites to have a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) or equivalent card with the aim that they will be qualified by December 2010.

To support the letter to sub-contractors, the companies have also distributed a short guide setting out the key features of CSCS and the initiative and providing details of how to secure advice and funding. In addition, the companies commissioned a poster to demonstrate their collective commitment to the initiative that will be displayed on all their sites as well as being sent to sub-contractors.

In order to sustain the initiative and build CSCS card-holding towards the December 2007 target date, the companies have agreed arrangements with CITB-ConstructionSkills for the regional co-ordination of activity with their sub-contractors and their own regional business units. In addition, CITB-ConstructionSkills has provided funding to enable HBF to provide national co-ordination and policy support for the companies in moving the initiative forward. This role is being undertaken on a consultancy basis.

Working with the CITB-ConstructionSkills' regional co-ordinators and designated senior contact points in the companies, the HBF co-ordinator is monitoring progress, helping to organise networking discussions to share experience and identify and pursue practical and policy issues that arise from the implementation of the initiative.

To focus future delivery of the initiative, HBF is currently working to assist the companies holding a first benchmarking audit in late March to establish the current take up of CSCS cards in the industry. The information provided by this audit will provide a basis for determining priorities for the next phase of activity under the initiative. Alongside the audit HBF has also been building close links with CSCS to ensure that policy and implementation issues that arise for home builders can be fully considered in discussions about the scheme's future development.

In addition, HBF will work actively to encourage other of its member companies to join the initiative and to extend co-ordination arrangements to support them.

(5) Qualifications for site managers

Professor Ball's study identified that there is an existing need for more site managers and that more will be required in future to deliver the increase in housing supply the Government wishes to see.

Home builders have had concerns, however, that existing NVQs for construction site management and supervision (at levels 4 and 3 respectively) do not adequately reflect the particular circumstances of the home building industry.

As a result a working group comprising representatives of the major HBF member companies, CITB-ConstructionSkills and training providers (including the NHBC) has been set up to review existing qualifications against the requirements of the industry. This has now agreed to recommend the addition of new home building units to the existing NVQs among other improvements designed to make the qualifications more accessible to practitioners. The level of qualification appropriate to particular roles in home building site management has also been considered.

The overall objective of this work is to ensure that the qualifications structure is suitably flexible and appropriate to the needs of home builders and suitably accessible to provide confidence on the part of managers that they can achieve recognition of their competence without unduly protracted or bureaucratic assessment processes. Providing the right qualifications structure for the future will be critical since it is recognised that competent site managers and supervisors have an important impact on overall business efficiency, quality and customer satisfaction.

The working group's recommendations should be considered by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority early in 2006 and it is hoped that the new NVQ options will become available during 2006.

(6) Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

The provision of appropriate education and training relating to the requirements for introducing innovative new methods or processes of construction has been identified as one of the six key areas requiring attention in the work undertaken in response to Recommendation 33 of the Barker Report on the obstacles to MMC.

The Steering Group on Recommendation 33 has now completed its work, but it is likely that on education and training there will be a number of proposed follow up actions relating to the roles of all key stakeholders involved in provision. These stakeholders include home builders, training providers and professional bodies, Sector Skills Councils and HBF.

This strategy will be developed to incorporate relevant actions agreed as follow up to the recommendations from the Barker 33 Steering Group's final report.

(7) Migrant workers

Professor Ball's study identifies that migrant workers are likely, at least in the shorter term, to provide part of the industry's response to a step change in housing supply. He foresees possibly a further 20,000 skilled migrant workers from EU countries being attracted to the UK if the general climate is such as to sustain a significant increase in home building output.

The skills of many existing migrant workers in the UK construction and home building industries are good, but it is recognised that such workers may face specific training requirements including in essential English language skills.

HBF will discuss with CITB-ConstructionSkills how such requirements can most effectively be met in future as part of its continuing dialogue to inform the provisions of the Sector Skills Agreement for Construction.

Separately, the HBF will discuss with CITB-ConstructionSkills whether there are any particular issues that need to be considered by the Government in respect of proposed changes to the UK's managed migration system for migrant workers from outside the EU and EEA.

(8) Engagement of the HBF membership in future activity

As indicated above, the HBF will work to open out involvement in current Major Home Builder Group skills and training initiatives to its wider membership.

For the future the means by which the HBF is able to engage its membership as a whole on skills, training and career issues will, however, be important for the success of all the proposals and initiatives summarised in this strategy.

A number of steps are envisaged to improve this engagement:

- 1 Building on the existing work of the HBF's Careers, Skills and Training Committee, including by further strengthening the representation of member companies on the Committee. In line with the outcome of HBF's recent Strategic Review, the Committee will take a more strategic approach to identifying priorities and seek to drive forward detailed work by establishing issue-specific and time-limited working groups on priority issues.
- 2 Involving members more via the proposed improvements to the HBF website.
- 3 Ensuring good communication with and strategic guidance from the HBF Board and other senior groups on skills issues.
- 4 Developing arrangements for a better engagement with members on skills issues at a regional level and for ensuring a regional input to CITB- ConstructionSkills regional advisory and decision- making processes.

The effectiveness of these measures and arrangements generally will be kept under regular review by the HBF management team and the HBF Board.