

Skills shortages in UK construction set to worsen

The findings in the latest skills survey by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) indicate that a shortage in skills will continue to be a challenge for the built environment, and one that will worsen as the demand for construction work increases.

Over 1200 managers and directors in construction, the majority working for large companies employing more than 500 people, took part in the CIOB research. The results show that people possessing crafts/trades, senior and middle management skills are highly sought after, yet migrant workers are mainly filling manual occupations.

Nine out of ten respondents believed the UK construction industry is currently suffering a skills shortage. 83% of respondents felt that recruiting senior management was difficult, and 84% regarded the recruitment of middle management as difficult in 2008. This represents an increase of 7% and 9% respectively compared to results from the CIOB's skills survey in 2006.

Michael Brown CIOB deputy chief executive said, "Despite the current credit crunch, 70% of the respondents believe that there will be an increase in construction demand in 2008 together with a worsening supply of middle and senior management. The shortage of professionals and managers within the industry is reflected in many parts of the world. Areas such as the Middle East will be a continuing draw for UK talent exacerbating the situation in the UK.

"We also know that the demand from young people for apprenticeship is outstripping the number of training places available in the industry. In 2007 ConstructionSkills, the industry's Sector Skills Council, was only able to place 8,500 people into apprenticeships out of the 50,000 who applied. This lack of apprenticeships will have a long-term impact on the skills base of the future."

The findings also highlight a recent reduction in the numbers of migrant workers coming to the UK to work as labourers, and suggest that if migrant workers do hold management skills, they are not recruited due to poor English language competency. In terms of the recruitment process, the majority of respondents said that their organisation relied on those migrant workers who are already in the UK.

You can view a full copy of the research at www.ciob.org.uk/resources/research