

INNOVATION

HS2 LAUNCHES LATEST ROUND OF INNOVATION ACCELERATOR ([see story here](#))

Working in partnership with the **Connected Places Catapult**, HS2's Innovation Accelerator programme is designed to create opportunities for start-ups and tech innovators to design and implement new way to help resolve complex challenges. Applications have now opened for the eighth round of the programme, which focuses on HS2's reset, with three initiatives that align to getting the railway back on track. Tech specialists are invited to develop ways that will help HS2 to address the specific challenges of:

- Improving value for money
- Enhancing site visibility and productivity
- Strengthening safety management

TECHNOLOGY

BALFOUR BEATTY INVESTS £7.2M IN COPILOT ([see story here](#))

Balfour Beatty is investing £7.2m embedding the use of **Microsoft 365 Copilot** across its business in what is being described as one of the largest commitments to artificial intelligence in UK construction to date. The AI-powered assistant will operate securely within Balfour Beatty's in-house IT environment, and is reckoned to already be starting to make its business more efficient, productive and safe. The company is also partnering with Microsoft to develop AI-powered 'smart agents' to improve quality, health & safety and assurance (QHSA) processes, integrating data to provide actionable insights for on-site decision-making. The first trial is on the Ag project in Scotland, focusing on early-stage reviews of inspection and test plans (ITPs), identifying common issues such as using incorrect or outdated templates reaching technical experts, improving the consistency, efficiency, and quality of ITPs.

FREEDOM TEAMS UP WITH ESRI TO PIONEER NEXT-GEN GEOSPATIAL solutions ([see story here](#))

The partnership will see **NG Bailey** subsidiary **Freedom Group** integrate **Esri's** geospatial solutions to enhance its capabilities in planning and delivering critical infrastructure. Esri provides geographic information systems (GIS) mapping software, ArcGIS, connecting data through the context of geography, providing world-leading capabilities for creating, managing, analysing, mapping, and sharing data. The partnership provides Freedom with advanced mapping services, simulation analytics, and visualisation tools, enabling better collaboration, enhance safety, reduce site visits, and improve delivery quality across the project lifecycle, whilst also supporting net-zero commitments.

ENGINEERS CLAIM FACADE DESIGN TOOL SLASHES COSTS ([see story here](#))

Consulting engineer **Buro Happold** has developed a parametric façade design tool that could reduce the cost of residential apartment construction by enough to improve scheme viability and accelerate delivery, potentially saving £10k of build cost per unit. With facades emerging as a critical pressure point for residential schemes, Buro Happold used a rapid prototyping design approach to deliver a detailed parametric study on daylighting, thermal comfort and energy use across the apartments.

TENDED CONDUCTS FIRST EVER TRIAL OF VIRTUAL WORKSITES ([see story here](#))

Tended, a leader in highly accurate geospatial positioning systems, successfully completed a trial for the rail industry's first ever worksite defined by Virtual Worksite Marker Boards (VWSMB) over the August bank holiday weekend. The aim of this trial was to test the effectiveness and safety of virtual boundaries in place of physical worksite marker boards. Partnering with **Siemens Mobility** and **Network Rail** East Coast Route, the system was trialled during engineering works as part of the £1.4bn East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP). Geofences were drawn around the worksite's safe work limits, and on-track plant operating within the possession was fitted with in-cab devices that provided real-time alerts to operators as they approached the worksite boundary, notifying them of their position.

CONSTRUCTION ROBOTICS REPORT ([see story here](#))

BuiltWorlds' 2025 Equipment & Robotics Benchmarking Report ([available here](#)) says construction companies are getting better at identifying and implementing innovative equipment and robotic technologies for specific tasks. The report reveals that robotics, as they currently exist, most often fall into one of four use case categories: layout and site printing; vertical work and finishing; drilling and installation; and mobility and surveillance, with the strongest motivators for adopting these particular solutions including an effort to reduce manual labour for workers and improve safety. Overall, while widespread robotic adoption remains in its early stages, a growing commitment among a small share of contractors does signal the technology is slowly but surely transitioning from "future tech" to a truly modern-day jobsite solution.

EQUIPMENT

ELECTRIC CRANE WITH 3,200-TONNE CAPACITY ([see story here](#))

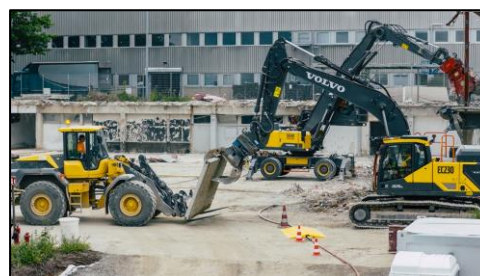
Belgian heavylift specialist **Sarens** has added a fifth ring-mounted crane to its giant SGC series. The new SGC-170 has a maximum rated lift capacity of 3,200 tonnes with a maximum load moment of 170,000 metre-tonnes. Its main boom with jib can lift 1,300 tonnes to a radius of 200 metres. This makes it the second biggest in the Sarens Giant Crane (SGC) series, behind only the SGC-250, otherwise known as Big Carl, which is currently at work at Hinkley Point C. The SGC-170 is electric powered, with an energy-recovery system that activates when lowering loads or moving the main boom. The regenerated electricity can be reused for other crane movements, while any surplus can be fed back into the grid, cutting energy consumption by up to 40 %.

**BULLIVANT TRIALS BATTERY-POWERED PILING RIG** ([see story here](#))

Roger Bullivant has deployed a **Junttan PMx2e**, powered by a 392 kWh battery system, on **Morgan Sindall's** Ardrossan Community Campus site, a £115m education development in North Ayrshire, the first time that a fully battery-powered pile driving rig has been used in the UK. The PMx2e has a replaceable battery pack that provides up to eight hours of piling per charge. By optimising the use of the two batteries, the PMx2e showed itself to be capable of providing a full working day of productivity. The rig was supplied to site with a 40kW portable outdoor charger, reducing the power requirement on site. Fitted with a five-tonne accelerated hammer and a maximum pile length capability of 20 metres, the PMx2e has a total operating weight of 63 tonnes. Its low noise output makes it ideal for sensitive environments like schools and urban developments.

**THE WORLD'S FIRST ALL-ELECTRIC DEMOLITION JOB** ([see story here](#))

A fleet of all-electric construction machines from **Volvo Construction Equipment** and **Volvo Trucks** has delivered a landmark project in sustainable urban development, powering the world's first fully electric deconstruction site in Erlangen, Germany, in collaboration with technology company **Siemens** and **Metzner Recycling**. Power was provided by a custom on-site transformer, which provided a direct connection to the grid and access to certified renewable electricity. This allowed multiple machines to be fast-charged simultaneously, while ensuring a continuous energy supply for the grid-connected equipment, grid-connected material handler for exterior deconstruction and handling. Operating on an active campus, with nearby offices still in use, the low-noise performance of the machines proved a major advantage, minimising disruption while maintaining productivity.

**MATERIALS/USES/METHODS****AGGREGATE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR ACTION ON FALLING RESERVES** ([see story here](#))

Permitted aggregate reserves in Great Britain fell by 46% between 2001 and 2023, according to the recently published *Aggregate Minerals Survey 2023* (AM2023). The Survey is conducted every four years by the **British Geological Survey** (BGS) for the **Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government** (MHCLG) to assess the national supply and demand of aggregate to inform future mineral planning policy. According to the **Mineral Products Association (MPA)**, the proposed changes to the planning system that are meant to speed up new housing approvals will do little to halt the decline in permitted reserves of the materials needed to build them. Aggregates continue to represent the largest material flow in the British economy, comprising the vast majority of materials for all construction products and being the only bulk material to be sourced almost entirely domestically.

ROADTECHS CLAIMS UK ASPHALT RECORD ([see story here](#))

Roadtechs, a UK manufacturer, supplier and installer of specialist surface treatments, is claiming a UK record by treating a 9km of trunk road with Reclamite in just under five hours. Reclamite is a spray applied rejuvenation treatment that reverses the detrimental impact of weather on our roads, preventing cracks and defects that lead to potholes. It is the only BBA HAPAS approved penetrative asphalt rejuvenator in the UK, Roadtechs says. The company treated and extended the life of the A1066 in Thetford, Norfolk, under a full road closure. In what is believed to be a UK first, the tankers worked in convoy to double the speed of application and treated 70,467 sqm, enabling the road to reopen less than five hours later, before the evening rush hour.



HEIDELBERG ADDS TO NORTH WALES CAPACITY ([see story here](#))

Heidelberg Materials has opened a new ready-mixed concrete plant in Abergele, North Wales, capable of meeting the demands of major construction projects and is equally equipped to supply ready-mixed concrete for residential uses such as foundations, driveways, pathways and patios. The plant is supplied by the company's adjacent Abergele quarry, removing the need for aggregate to be brought in.

LONDON LINTELS PLANS ESSEX SITE ([see story here](#))

London Lintels is planning expansion on the back of its acquisition by Milbank Group, parent company of Colchester's Milbank Concrete Products. London Lintels supplies lintels and structural building materials to builders, developers and merchants across London and the south. Its product range includes Naylor Concrete Products, Catnic Lintels, Birtley Lintels and wind posts by ACS Stainless Steel Fixings. It now plans to hold stock in Essex as well as Winchester for added capacity and speedier deliveries.

WINVIC TACKLES COTON PARK SITE CHALLENGES ([see story here](#))

Winvic Construction has started construction of a 250,000 sq ft single-storey warehouse at Coton Park in Rugby. As part of the infrastructure and enabling works, Winvic used a 350-tonne crane to install a 34-metre ex Ministry of Defence tank bridge, to span a 457mm high-pressure gas main, a critical element of the works to enable site access. To further progress works, Winvic is constructing a Filcor (polystyrene) road that will wrap around a 54-metre-long 4m x 2m culvert. Traditional construction methods such as cement and compacted fill were not viable due to loadings imposed onto the gas main. Winvic and **Cadent Gas** are working together to develop and implement the solution to ensure the integrity of the gas infrastructure and safety of operatives on site.

HISTORIC CHURCH ON STILTS ([see story here](#))

A unique "bottoming-out" ceremony at a City of London site has revealed incredible images of a 700-year-old church tower on stilts in the heart of the project. Innovative engineering at **AXA IM Alts'** Fifty Fenchurch Street development allows the Tower of All Hallows Staining Church to remain suspended above 60,000 sq ft of excavation following the removal of over 125,000 tonnes of earth and ground material. The bottoming-out of the scheme marked a significant construction milestone for the site which will be home to a 36-storey flagship development.

**ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY****PILOT TO REUSE BUILDING MATERIALS EXPANDS TO THE EAST END** ([see story here](#))

Tower Hamlets Council is joining the ROMULUS scheme (Reuse Of Materials Using Local Unitary Stakeholders), promoting use of reclaimed materials in new build projects and selling materials from council-owned sites such as schools and council buildings, creating a local market place. ROMULUS works similar to popular online auction sites. Organisations sign up to take part in the reuse marketplace, where old, but good quality, materials can be bought or sold. Materials could range from reclaimed bricks to old kitchen units and bathroom suites.

LOWER THAMES CROSSING TO LEAD GREEN PLANNING REFORMS ([see story here](#))

New environmental planning reforms will be tested on the Lower Thames Crossing. The giant infrastructure scheme will have one lead environmental body in charge in a bid to end the "merry-go-round" of developers dealing with multiple green groups. The move is designed to speed-up the planning process and prevent debacles like the £100m HS2 bat tunnel.

BARHALE LAUNCHES LOW CARBON SOLUTIONS ARM ([see story here](#))

Barhale has launched a new Low Carbon Solutions unit targeting growing markets including heat recovery, heat transfer and heat networks. It will also provide Barhale's existing operations with internal advice for infrastructure projects to improve their carbon and sustainability performance and identify opportunities to install complementary technologies at the build stage.

FIRST UK CEMENT AND WASTE PLANTS TO START CARBON CAPTURE BUILD ([see story here](#))

Construction is set to begin on two of the UK's first carbon capture projects in the cement and energy-from-waste sectors. **Heidelberg Materials'** Padeswood cement works in North Wales and **Encyclis'** Protos Energy Recovery Facility in Cheshire will now move to delivery, a landmark breakthrough in decarbonising two of the toughest industries to clean up. At Padeswood, Heidelberg will build a full-scale capture plant at its existing cement works. Carbon dioxide captured at both plants will be piped into the HyNet network for permanent storage under Liverpool Bay. Encyclis will retrofit carbon capture to its Protos energy from waste plant. It means non-recyclable waste will produce reliable low-carbon power instead of pumping out harmful emissions.

TRAINING, RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYMENT**CLADDING TRAINING BOOST TO ACCELERATE REMEDIATION WORK** ([see story here](#))

Updated training courses have been launched to upskill 100 rainscreen façade system installers and 24 supervisors to accelerate post-Grenfell cladding remediation works across the country. The **Construction Industry Training Board** has

awarded Wigan headquartered **3B Training** a contract to deliver a pilot programme across England, Scotland and Wales.

NEW CLADDING QUALIFICATION ([see story here](#))

The **Metal Cladding & Roofing Manufacturers Association** (MCRMA) has launched an 'institute of excellence' to provide a formal recognition system for the skills and specialisms of those working within the UK's metal roofing and facades sector, turning what is currently a trade into a profession. In addition, the **Metal Cladding & Roofing Institute** (MCRI) has been formed in response to the post-Grenfell building safety agenda that has placed increased scrutiny on competency through the supply chain. Unlike the MCRMA, which is an association of companies, the MCRI is focused on individuals. One of its core objectives is to encourage the development of the skills and knowledge of members through the active involvement of recognised CPD learning and the engagement of others to advance their careers within the sector. It plans to facilitate CPD approved training modules and materials via the MCRMA and other sources covering the design, installation and maintenance of metal cladding and roofing.

GOVERNMENT UNVEILS 10 NEW CONSTRUCTION TECHNICAL COLLEGES ([see story here](#))

The government has named 10 specialist Construction Technical Excellence Colleges to train more than 40,000 future builders, bricklayers, electricians, carpenters and plumbers by 2029. Backed by £100m of fresh funding, the newly-designated construction college hubs will be spread across every region of England, with hubs in Derby, Suffolk, London, Sunderland, Wigan, Kent, Exeter, Bedford, Dudley and Leeds. The colleges, which already existed, will work on a revamped "hub and spoke" model, partnering with local training providers and employers.

CITB LAUNCHES TRAINING PROVIDER NETWORK ([see story here](#))

The **Construction Industry Training Board** (CITB) is seeking to improve the quality of industry training by selling its stamp of approval to training providers, by launching its Training Provider Network (TPN) for approved training providers across England, Scotland and Wales. To become a member, training providers must deliver training relevant to employers in the construction industry and meet a quality assurance criteria specific to the type of training they provide. TPN members are offered the opportunity to connect directly with employers through initiatives like Employer Networks, to build relationships with employers and create better work placements and employment opportunities for new entrants.

THE CHANGING FACE OF APPRENTICES ([see story here](#))

Apprenticeships are usually thought of as a route into work for school leavers, but the reality in construction tells a different story. **Department for Education** figures show that 43% of construction apprentices are aged 25 and over, with many already employed in the business before enrolling. This reflects a wider national trend which sees nearly half (48%) of all apprentices in England over the age of 25. Employers are increasingly using apprenticeships not only to bring in new talent but also to upskill and retain existing staff, from tradespeople wanting to formalise their skills to site supervisors stepping into leadership roles.

INDUSTRY ANGER OVER SUDDEN CITB FUNDING CHANGES ([see story here](#))

Construction training professionals have been blindsided by sudden funding changes announced by the **CITB**. The CITB has given the industry only a few weeks notice that it will be closing the current Skills & Training (S&T) fund which is worth up to £10,000 to many smaller contractors. Other cuts include an early ending of enhanced grants for grandfather rights transitioning under the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme. CITB said the S&T fund is being terminated because it overlaps with the newer Employer Networks funding route. Leaders at the Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS), the trade body for fit-out specialists, has described recent changes to training funding by the CITB as a [kick in the teeth](#) for contractors.

AMEY COMPLETES 4TH COHORT OF PROGRAMME DEVELOPING FEMALE LEADERS IN INFRASTRUCTURE ([see story here](#))

Amey has completed the 4th cohort of its award-winning Women@Amey Leadership Development Programme, a proven initiative helping to close the leadership gender gap in infrastructure and engineering. The 18-month programme, which holds a Princess Royal Training Award, is designed to support women in developing their leadership capabilities, building confidence, and advancing their career progression. It combines training, mentoring, and strategic project work, with participants tackling leadership challenges relevant to Amey and the wider sector.

FORMER TRAINEE JOINS MGF BOARD ([see story here](#))

It can be done. Fifteen years ago he was on work experience; today he is on the board. Wigan-based temporary works specialist **MGF** has promoted Chris Whitworth to its executive board. He first worked for MGF in 2010, joining on a six-week work experience placement as a student. On graduating from university, he formally joined the company in 2012 as a management trainee. Since then, he has gained hands-on experience across nearly every area of the business – in the yards, on the wagons, testing and maintaining equipment, the hire desk, depot management, sales, purchasing and operations.

RICS OPENS NEW ROUTES INTO THE PROFESSION ([see story here](#))

The **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors** (RICS) is calling for expressions of interest for two new planned pathways to RICS membership. RICS sees scope to expand its membership by opening up to specialists who work in environmental

sciences and the repair and improvement of housing. It is proposing two new pathways to RICS membership:

- Residential retrofit surveying (AssocRICS)
- Sustainability advisory (chartered surveyor)

Also in a bid to keep current, RICS has its eyes on a data analytics and intelligence pathway for development next year.

MORE WEST MIDLANDERS PROGRESS INTO JOBS ON HS2 (see story here)

Young people and the unemployed are continuing to benefit from new careers on HS2 thanks to the breadth of earn-as-you-learn training opportunities introduced by the project. New figures show that in the last three months, 69 people started new careers with HS2's Midlands-based construction partner, **Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV)**. In all, this means that 12,535 local residents are now employed on the UK's biggest infrastructure programme – representing over a third of HS2's 34,000-strong workforce. The total includes 740 people from the West Midlands who have secured an HS2 apprenticeship and a further 1,936 who have progressed into jobs following a period of unemployment.

SPENCER GROUP DEEPENS COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING YOUNG TALENT (see story here)

The Hull based rail infrastructure specialist is deepening its commitment to developing young talent by building on its successful apprenticeship programme with a new cohort and buddy scheme. This year's cohort of 13 young people includes six engineering apprentices, two each in commercial, marketing and IT roles and one plant fitting apprentice, taking the total number employed to more than 65 in seven years. Under the buddy scheme, each apprentice is paired with an apprentice from an earlier cohort who will support them during their journey. In addition, apprentices are assigned an experienced mentor who guides them through their studies.

QTS GROUP EMPOWERS THE NEXT GENERATION (see story here)

National rail contractor **QTS Group** recently hosted its Future of Rail event at The Midland Railway in Butterley.

Now in its fourth year, and the second time the event has taken place in England, Future of Rail inspires children to learn more about the job roles and potential career paths within the rail industry. QTS hosted a range of activities and workshops, including STEM activities, dedicated careers sessions with QTS staff and plant and survey equipment demonstrations.

PAL+ TRAINING RIG LANDS IN LEICESTER (see story here)

Nationwide Platforms has expanded its specialist training offering with the installation of its first fixed IPAF PAL+ training rig in Leicester, increasing access to advanced operator training for powered access professionals across the region. The rig is purpose-built for the IPAF PAL+ course: a one-day, advanced qualification for experienced operators of mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs). PAL+ is increasingly mandated by Tier 1 contractors and large infrastructure sites and is rapidly becoming the expected standard for complex, high-risk MEWP operations.

AMEY TO DOUBLE ROLES THROUGH LATEST EARLY CAREERS RECRUITMENT DRIVE (see story here)

Amey is preparing to double its 2026 Early Careers intake, with more than 200 roles expected across the business, many of which are now live. The move comes as the company welcomed more than 100 new graduates, apprentices, and placement students this September, reinforcing its commitment to building diverse talent pipelines in a sector where entry-level opportunities can be difficult to find.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

ASBESTOS FAIL (see story here)

A Manchester-based construction company has been fined after workers were put at risk of exposure to asbestos. It was acting as the principal contractor during work at the former Unicorn public house on Liverpool Road in Eccles when, during a routine inspection in 2022, a **Health & Safety Executive (HSE)** inspector discovered that 12 square metres of asbestos insulation board (AIB) had been present in a dumb waiter lift shaft, but had already been illegally removed by unknown individuals. As a result, the inspector issued a prohibition notice stopping all work on site until an asbestos survey had been completed.

STREAM APP DESIGNED TO STOP WORKERS GETTING HIT BY PLANT (see story here)

A new smartphone application can help eliminate the people-plant interface risk on construction sites, its developers claim. **AmcoGiffen** and **Safety Shield Global** say that they have "pushed the boundaries of digital worksite protection" with the launch of the STREAM app. (Site Team Reporting and Emergency Accident Management) which uses human form recognition (HFR) technology tailored to specific site dimensions and plant operations. Providing real-time alerts to supervisors, and with a built-in escalation process for project and contract managers, STREAM warns of activities, processes, or behaviours that could lead to a potential people plant interface (PPI) event – situations where someone is at risk of being crushed or run over – allowing for immediate intervention. It has been mandated on all new AmcoGiffen sites.

HSE PUBLISHES EXCAVATOR ISOLATION WARNING (see story here)

The **Health & Safety Executive (HSE)** has published a safety notice aimed at excavator operators, sling ers and anyone working near them, warning of the risk of injury if the operator does not use the safety control lever or isolation device

correctly. If there are people in the operational arc of an excavator or similar plant, the safety control lever should be applied, or other methods used, to isolate the machine, while it is at rest. Research shows unintended movements of plant occur, but use of a safety control lever or isolation device can prevent this.

HINKLEY POINT CONTRACTORS FACE SECOND SAFETY PROSECUTION ([see story here](#))

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has notified **Bouygues Travaux Publics** and **Laing O'Rourke** that they will be prosecuted following a rebar mesh wall accident at the Somerset nuclear construction site. The charges relate to an incident that occurred in 2022, in a pre-fabrication yard on site. An employee sustained serious injuries when a wall of rebar mesh fell upon him as he was working to remove the rebar from a vertical jig to be transferred to another part of the site.

GROUND-LEVEL ADBLUE INNOVATION ([see story here](#))

Southampton-based **Commercial Fuel Solutions** has developed a ground-level AdBlue fill solution that is designed to enhance safety and ease of use for heavy machinery operators. The system eliminates the need for operators to climb ladders with 10-litre AdBlue cans to refill tanks mounted 2.5 metres off the ground. Instead, it allows AdBlue to be dispensed from ground level using a bowser.

PULSAR® EXPANDS REACT RANGE WITH NEW MID-LAYERS ([see story here](#))

PULSAR®, a leading manufacturer of high-visibility and protective workwear, has added two new high-performance mid-layers to its sportswear-inspired REACT range, preparing the workforce for the colder months ahead. The all-new Quarter Zip and Sweatshirt join the collection for the Autumn/Winter 2025 season as premium mid-layer options, designed to keep wearers both visible and comfortable as they switch between layers in demanding work environments.

SERIOUS SAFETY RISKS POSED BY UNQUALIFIED CONTRACTORS, WARN BESA & TICA ([see story here](#))

The **Building Engineering Services Association (BESA)** and the **Thermal Insulation Contractors Association (TICA)** have joined forces to warn that operatives often working for multi-trade firms are putting lives at risk by carrying out specialist work for which they are unqualified. In their campaign against unqualified contractors, BESA and TICA cite one recent project where an unqualified multi-trade contractor installed ductwork with serious safety flaws, creating health risks and fire hazards. Both trade bodies fear that, rather than being an isolated example, it may be 'the tip of the iceberg'.

BUILDERS FINED AFTER FALLING PIPE HITS FIVE-YEAR-OLD ([see story here](#))

A construction company and its director have been fined after a five-year-old child was injured by a falling cast iron pipe. The incident occurred during building work on an extension to a house a few seconds' walk from a local primary school. A cast iron pipe fell onto a passing child striking him on the head and fracturing his skull. The base of the pipe had been broken away by the builder some days before to allow him to excavate into the concrete floor. When a TV cable was freed from the pipe, the top two sections of pipe, weighing over 45kg, fell across the pavement. Both the pipe and the fixings were corroded. An HSE investigation found that the company had failed to properly assess what was a foreseeable risk.

RETAINING WALL COLLAPSE KILLED BUILDER ON SCHOOL SITE ([see story here](#))

A contractor has been fined after an employee was crushed to death when a 1.8m high retaining wall collapsed onto him at a construction site at a school in Bath. An HSE investigation found the company failed to properly plan and supervise the construction of the retaining wall, which led to it becoming unstable when a large load of aggregate was placed against the incomplete wall which was not supported. HSE guidance requires that any temporary structure must be designed and installed to withstand any loads placed against it and that it is used in accordance with its design. This includes ensuring appropriately trained operatives are provided with a suitable written design and plan to install to ensure the structure remains stable.

KILLED BY A SIX-FOOT FALL ([see story here](#))

A shop fitting company has been fined £45,000 after an employee suffered a fatal fall whilst installing a metal sign to the front of a computer shop. He was standing on the platform of a low-level scaffolding tower without any edge protection in place when he fell to the pavement below. Although the height he fell from was only six feet, it was enough for him to suffer serious head injuries and he died four days later. An HSE investigation found that the company failed to prevent the risk of a fall from a distance liable to cause personal injury. The preferred method of fall prevention on tower scaffolds is the fitting of suitable guardrails around the platform. If these had been in place, it is highly unlikely that the worker in this case would have died.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

TRU LAUNCHES SECOND ROUND OF COMMUNITY FUND ([see story here](#))

The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is launching the second round of its Community Fund, offering £250,000 to support local community groups, schools and charities along its major railway route. Building on the success of last year's scheme, the TRU Community Fund will provide grants of £1,000, £5,000, £10,000 or £20,000 to organisations within five miles of the Transpennine route, which runs between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York.

CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL

RETENTIONS COULD BE BANNED IN LATE PAYMENT CRACKDOWN ([see story here](#))

included in a suite of proposed legislation to improve conditions for small and medium-sized businesses were “options to reform or ban cash retentions in construction contracts.” The move was hailed by industry campaigners. A spokesman for the Civil Engineering Contractors Association said the move would unlock cashflow across the sector, supporting SMEs and specialist contractors, allow businesses to operate under more sustainable margins.

FIT-OUT TRADE BODY HITS BACK AT BLOATED CONTRACTS ([see story here](#))

Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS), the trade body for plastering, dry walling and interiors specialists, is hitting back at the spread of bloated legal terms and amendments with hidden risks in contracts with the launch of a stripped-back 500-word subcontract aimed at cutting through legal jargon and making construction contracts simpler and fairer. The new template forms part of the trade body's *Responsible No* campaign to push back on overly complex contract terms that tie up specialist firms in unnecessary red tape and risk. Free to FIS members, the simplified sub-contract aims to reduce disputes, speed up deal-making and foster better business relationships across the sector.

STAGED PROCUREMENT TO MAKE COMEBACK AS PRICING RISK BITES ([see story here](#))

Consultants **McBain** are predicting a marked return to package-based procurement models as developers seek to push forward with big-ticket commercial schemes without locking into risky lump sum deals. Their *Summer 2025 Construction Market Report* said that confidence was returning to the sector but warned clients remain cautious about pricing risk – making it harder to strike deals on large two-stage contracts. They forecast an increase in the use of innovative procurement strategies including the possible resurgence of the package-based procurement model, which offers an alternative to traditional lump sum contracts, and larger contractors choosing to self-deliver where possible, such as splitting mechanical and electrical services into smaller, separately procured trades. The report also says more contractors are seeking to explore co-investment opportunities, seeking higher returns through shared risk and reward.

SCF OPENS DOOR TO SINGLE STAGE TENDERS ([see story here](#))

The Southern Construction Framework is being reshaped with the introduction of single stage tenders for the first time. The £4.5bn SCF6 framework, due to go live in May 2027, will combine higher and lower value projects into one arrangement, ending the current split between SCF's £4m+ jobs and the separate domestic frameworks both councils have been running below that threshold. Procurement will begin in early 2026 and, for the first time, SCF will be open to both two-stage and single-stage routes on lower value projects, in recognition of changing client demands.

GROUNDWORKS BOSS WINS PAYOUT OVER GAGGING ORDER ([see story here](#))

A groundworks boss has been awarded more than £500,000 in damages after a house builder tried to silence him after he raised concerns about asbestos on sites. Martin McGowan took legal action against Scottish house builder Springfield Properties. The Court of Session heard that McGowan worked as a subcontractor for Springfield employing up to 70 people on their projects. Both sides fell out in 2016 when McGowan raised concerns about asbestos and a lack of PPE for his staff on a number of sites. Springfield responded by obtaining an interim court order to prevent McGowan speaking publicly about the asbestos. The order was eventually lifted in 2021 after Springfield was fined £10,000 for offences involving asbestos at a site in East Dunbartonshire.

AVERAGE MARGINS HIT 2.4% FOR TOP CONTRACTORS ([see story here](#))

Each year **The Construction Index** analyses the financial accounts of the leading UK construction companies. This year's review of the Top 100 contractors is based on an analysis of the companies' most recent financial results filed before 30th June 2025. It shows aggregate turnover reached £76.5bn, up by 7.3% compared to last year's rankings. As construction output has not grown that much in a year, that increase in turnover can only be at the expense of smaller competitors. More significant and heartening is the 57% growth in aggregate pre-tax profits in the latest Top 100, to just over £1.9bn. Turnover grew at 69 of the Top 100 companies – down from 78 last year – while pre-tax profits increased at 68 companies this year, up from 51 in 2024. As a result, pre-tax profit margins – calculated as profit divided by turnover – increased substantially. The average pre-tax margin across the Top 100 rose to 2.4% this time, up from 1.9% for the same cohort in the preceding year. The full list is [here](#).

CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES THAT COULDN'T SURVIVE IN 2025 ([see story here](#))

A list of construction companies who have ceased trading up to September this year.

ISG SUBBIES TO START CLASS ACTION OVER FAILED PROJECT BANK ACCOUNTS ([see story here](#))

Subcontractors left nursing huge losses from the collapse of **ISG** are preparing class actions against the Government after the much-vaunted Project Bank Accounts system failed to protect their cash. ISG's collapse in September 2024 left more than £1.1bn of debts. Subcontractors on MoJ prison projects were among those left unpaid for completed work, despite operating under PBAs and Whitehall insisting that their cash was ringfenced. Instead, funds were swept into ISG's insolvency estate under UK rules, leaving subbies high and dry.

CONTRACTORS HIKE BID MARGINS AS RISK FEARS GROW ([see story here](#))

Contractors are cranking up overhead and profit margins in bids as they take an increasingly cautious stance on risk and inflation. According to the latest market survey from consultant **Gleeds**, contractors are continuing their retreat from high risk, with 57% admitting they've reduced appetite for risk this quarter. Around three-quarters revealed that had walked away from tenders – up from two-thirds a year ago. Pre-construction periods are also dragging out, with deals that once took 12–18 months now stretching beyond two years in many regions. Gleeds warns the combination of jittery investor confidence, tighter development finance and regulatory delays such as Gateway 2 is slowing schemes before they even break ground. Margins built into bids are moving upwards too, rising from 5.7% in Q1 to 6.3% in Q3 – with consultants warning they could soon push towards the 7% threshold as costs continue to bite. Contractors reported that increases in contractor NI costs are being passed directly on to the client/end user, and that procurement rules and policy add-ons were making schemes unviable.

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

[NEW GUIDANCE ON HAZARD DETECTION TECH \(see story here\)](#)

The **Construction Industry Plant Safety Group** has published *Good Practice Guidance for the Use of Machine-Mounted Human Form Recognition Systems*. Human form recognition systems (HFRS) in construction use cameras and sensors to identify people near machinery, alerting operators and others to potential hazards. The publication extends to more than 50 pages and provides advice to plant owners, users, operators, managers, manufacturers and third-party suppliers about considerations for the fitment, use and management of human form recognition systems installed on plant to detect and warn of human presence in defined danger zones.

[MINISTRY CONSULTS ON DCO REFORM \(see story here\)](#)

The **Ministry of Housing, Communities and & Government** has launched a consultation about how infrastructure consenting for nationally significant infrastructure projects could be speeded up. Before 2008, big infrastructure projects were required to go through a planning inquiry, which could take years. The Planning Act 2008 introduced a streamlined process for major infrastructure projects, officially designated as nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs), replacing the inquiry process with a shorter investigation by the newly established Planning Inspectorate followed by ministerial sign-off for the development consent order (DCO). But the DCO process can still take time, although the biggest delays are usually due to ministers bucking politically toxic or expensive decisions by delaying signing DCOs. This consultation seeks views on changes to guidance, services operated by the public sector, and secondary legislation to streamline the infrastructure planning process for NSIPs.

[NEW GUIDANCE FOR STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENTS \(see story here\)](#)

The **Institution of Structural Engineers** (IStructE) has published *Appraising factors of safety in existing engineered structures* in response to what it perceives as a growing awareness in the built environment of the importance of structural assessments, either as part of a safety check or to justify adaption. While there is already a range of literature about how to assess existing structures, IStructE felt that there was a lack of consistent approaches and terminologies, both of which this guide seeks to address.

[UK TO ACCEPT US NUCLEAR APPROVALS \(see story here\)](#)

UK and US nuclear authorities have signed an accord to recognise each other's regulations and approvals. In a move designed to accelerate the deployment of advanced nuclear reactors across UK and the USA markets, the **Office for Nuclear Regulation** (ONR) and the **US Nuclear Regulatory Commission** (NRC) have signed a new memorandum of understanding, which reaffirms an agreement signed in 2020 to cooperate and exchange technical information as the two countries move towards global deployment of new nuclear technologies. The initiative is expected to cut duplication and fast-track decisions, targeting reactor design reviews within two years, and nuclear site licensing within one year. The two regulators will mutually recognise each other's assessments, with appropriate due diligence to ensure legal compliance, but retain independent decision-making.

[RICS SEEKS FEEDBACK ON GLOBAL CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS \(see story here\)](#)

The **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors** (RICS) is calling on construction professionals across the globe to respond to its new consultation on global construction standards. Between 2009-21, RICS, through its Black Book suite of guidance notes, released 32 separate titles covering different elements of quantity surveying practice. For the first time, RICS is going to release a combined professional standard incorporating global principles of quantity surveying and project management practice – the subject of this consultation, alongside six practice information pieces covering the life cycle of construction projects.

[BSI PRODUCES STANDARD FOR INCLUSIVE PPE \(see story here\)](#)

With a lot of personal protective equipment (PPE) available in only small, medium or large – with small being a small able-bodied man – getting a good fit from PPE can be a challenge for many. Now the British Standards Institution (BSI) has published guidance designed to ensure employers (across all sectors) provide staff with PPE that fits, regardless of gender,

ethnicity, body shape, age or disability. The *Provision of Inclusive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Guide (BS 30417)* aims to address the longstanding issue of ill-fitting PPE.

RICS LAUNCHES GLOBAL STANDARD ON RESPONSIBLE AI USE ([see story here](#))

Set to take effect on 9 March 2026, the new standard sets out mandatory requirements and best practice expectations for RICS members and regulated firms worldwide. It addresses the growing integration of AI across valuation, construction, infrastructure and land services – and aims to ensure these tools are used ethically, transparently and with professional oversight. RICS said the standard represents a decisive move to guide the profession through the rapid evolution of AI technologies. Key provisions of the new standard include:

- Governance & risk management: Firms must implement clear policies around data use, AI system governance and risk documentation, including the creation of risk registers and due diligence procedures.
- Professional judgment & oversight: Surveyors must assess the reliability of AI outputs and remain accountable for all work, applying professional scepticism and expertise throughout.
- Transparency & client communication: Clients must be informed, in writing, of when and how AI will be used in service delivery, including options for redress or opting out.
- Ethical development of AI: For firms developing their own AI systems, the standard mandates assessments of data quality, stakeholder involvement, sustainability impact, and legal compliance

CIBSE SETS UP NEW LIFTS GROUP ([see story here](#))

The **Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers** (CIBSE) has launched a professional group for individuals and organisations working across the design, engineering and installation of lifts, escalators and emerging vertical mobility systems. The **Society of Vertical Transportation** (SoVT) builds on the legacy of the well-established **CIBSE Lifts Group**, which has been around for decades. The new society goes further, offering a structure for professional membership, specialist continuing professional development (CPD), collaboration and international engagement. The launch coincides with the release of the CIBSE Guide D 2025 – *Transportation Systems in Buildings*, an internationally recognised reference for vertical transportation professionals. Covering passenger and goods lifts, escalators, moving walkways, lifting platforms and emerging technologies, the updated guide offers advice for design, installation, commissioning, operation and maintenance.

MARKET NEWS/TRENDS

AVIATION

HEATHROW AIRPORT UNVEILS £49BN 'SUPERHUB' EXPANSION ([see story here](#))

Heathrow has submitted its plan to deliver a third runway and invest £49bn into a vast transformation of the UK's biggest airport. The airport operator said it was ready to start design and supply chain activity this year, but needs a swift policy signal and regulatory framework from Government to stay on track. The detailed blueprint sets out how the money will be spent over multiple decades, with £21bn earmarked for the 3,500m runway and airfield infrastructure, forming the first phase. This figure is up from £14bn in 2018, largely due to construction inflation, and includes land acquisition, realignment of the M25 on top of runway and taxiway construction.

RAIL

RAIL DIRECTOR MAGAZINE

August (electrification) and September (stations) issues available [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

NETWORK RAIL SPEND DOWN AS CP7 SHIFT BITES CONTRACTORS ([see story here](#))

Network Rail's £8.8bn supplier spend in the first year of Control Period 7 has sparked concern across the civils supply chain as firms warn workloads are thinner and harder to track. The rail client's latest supplier spend report for CP7 shows overall investment in 2024/25 dropped 5% on the prior year and sits 3% below the CP6 average once inflation is factored in. Direct spend with SMEs slumped 11%, even though small firms still make up 70% of suppliers, as more work is channelled through tier one contractors under new delivery models.

NETWORK RAIL PARTNERS WITH WSP TO COUNTER FLOODING AND COASTAL EROSION ([see story here](#))

Network Rail and supplier WSP are working together to create a framework to improve the railway's readiness for – and resistance to – potential floods and coastal erosion. The Flood and Coastal Risk Management Framework being created with partners WSP will bring a level of standardisation and greater knowledge of potential problems across the network.

INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERSPEND – CLARITY NEEDED ON RAIL IMPROVEMENTS ([see story here](#))

Analysis of new data released by **HM Treasury** (HMT) has revealed an underspend of £3.2bn on infrastructure and construction projects in the financial year 2024-25. The figures show the schemes being developed by the Department for Transport (DfT) recorded an underspend of £264m from a baseline budget of £6.8bn across all the different categories of projects. The underspend includes schemes like Northern Powerhouse Rail, which had a budget of £132m but only saw £80.59m spent on it. The unspent £51m contributed to the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority's

(NISTA) red deliverability rating, meaning it 'appears unachievable'. The paused Midland Main Line electrification also had an underspend of £10m.

Transport for the North's Board also [expressed disappointment](#) that several critical rail investments in the North had been paused in the recent government Spending Review. These included improvements on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) north of York, Midland Main Line electrification to Sheffield, work at Sheffield Station itself to improve capacity and upgrades to the Cheshire Lines route.

The **Railway Industry Association** (RIA) has called on Government to inject [more urgency](#) into setting out its rail strategy, to help it deliver its ambition to kick-start economic growth across the nations and regions of the UK.

[OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD WELCOMES INDUSTRY PROGRESS \(see story here\)](#)

The **Office of Rail and Road** (ORR) has welcomed the progress made by industry towards the recommendations it set out as part of joint work with the **Rail Safety and Standards Board** (RSSB) and **Network Rail** to improve health and safety decision making. The regulator's recommendations were designed to help the GB rail industry take a more evidence-based and consistent approach in weighing costs and benefits of safety decisions. Progress was achieved through the roll out of internal guidance and a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) tool, with plans to ensure these are embedded and decision-makers apply them consistently.

HIGHWAYS

[ROAD SAFETY MONEY DIVERTED \(see story here\)](#)

Industry regulator **The Office of Rail & Road** has received a complaint about how **National Highways** diverts funds to irrelevant projects to win hearts and minds. **Transport Action Network** (TAN), which campaigns for more public transport and cycle lanes and less road building, has written to The Office of Rail & Road (ORR) to ask it to investigate National Highways, which it regulates, for misusing taxpayers' money. TAN has found that National Highways is funding all kinds of things that are completely unrelated to managing and improving the motorway and trunk road network, which is the only job that National Highways has to do – its *raison d'être*.

NUCLEAR

[TEESSIDE, NOTTS AND LONDON GATEWAY SET FOR NUCLEAR PROJECTS \(see story here\)](#)

The Prime Minister has hailed a new "golden age" of nuclear power as British and US firms unveiled five major commercial tie-ups, with a flagship plan to replace the outgoing Hartlepool power station with up to 12 advanced modular reactors, in a scheme promising 2,500 jobs and a £12bn investment for the North East. The projects form part of a new Atlantic Partnership for Advanced Nuclear Energy, designed to cut red tape, align safety standards and slash the time it takes to license nuclear reactors from up to four years to just two. Other deals include a £11bn plan for mini-reactor-powered data centres in Nottinghamshire at the former Cottam coal-fired power station, a micro modular plant at London Gateway port, and assessing possible sites in the UK for gigawatt-scale advanced Sodium sodium-cooled storage reactors.

OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

[SCOTLAND'S CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE PASSES £18BN \(see story here\)](#)

A database of construction projects planned for Scotland over the next decade now has more than 1,000 projects listed on it. *The Construction Pipeline Forecast Tool*, developed and managed by the **Scottish Futures Trust**, has grown its ranks of contributing client organisations to more than 50 public bodies. The free to access platform now contains 1,192 construction projects to be delivered by 2035, with an aggregate value of more than £18bn.

[MICROSOFT PLANS UK DATA CENTRE DRIVE \(see story here\)](#)

Microsoft has announced plans to invest £11bn in UK infrastructure, including more data centres as well as the country's largest supercomputer. During the four years from 2025 to 2028 Microsoft plans to invest a total of £22bn in its UK operations, half to support its ongoing operations and half in new capital projects.

[ESSEX AI DATA CENTRE GAINS OUTLINE PLANNING \(see story here\)](#)

The scheme at Wickford, being brought forward by developer Caineal, will be built out over seven years on land next to the A127 and Old Nevendon Road. Work will be phased, with £500m spent on the main build and a further £500m on computer hardware fit-out. The project involves building 27,000m² of data halls and offices built across a multi-level complex with two levels of IT halls, topped by three levels of offices, alongside a 4,500m² substation fed by underground power cables.

TRENDS

[CONCRETE SALES HIT 62-YEAR LOW \(see story here\)](#)

New figures showing that concrete volumes hit a 62-year low in the second quarter of 2025 are fuelling fears of plummeting business confidence, stalling investment and further driving down construction demand. Data from the **Mineral Products Association** (MPA), based on sales volumes across Great Britain in the last quarter, also shows asphalt volumes over the last four quarters are the lowest in a decade. Aggregates and mortar sales also fell in Q2 2025. Ready-

mixed concrete volumes dropped by 11.5% to just 2.7 million cubic metres (Mm³) in Q2 2025. Over the last four quarters (Q3 2024 to Q2 2025), total sales were 11.9 Mm³ – the lowest since 1963.

Subsequent data from the MPA showed that UK cement production has hit its lowest level since 1950 as high energy, regulatory and labour costs hamper the sector. The UK made 7.3m tonnes of cement in 2024 – around half of what it produced in 1990 ([see here](#))

PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX DROPS ([see story here](#))

According to the latest **S&P Global** Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), total construction activity levels fell at the steepest pace since May 2020. Underlying data highlighted marked decreases in volumes of work carried out across all three monitored sub-sectors, but a considerable drag came from a fresh drop in residential building. August data was slightly better, insofar as the decline was lower ([see data here](#)).

RICS SURVEY REVEALS FLAT WORKLOADS BUT SOME OPTIMISM ([see story here](#))

Latest quarterly report from the surveying profession indicates that UK construction is struggling to gather momentum. The **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors** (RICS) describes its Q2 2025 UK Construction Monitor as "a mixed but cautiously optimistic snapshot of the nation's construction sector". While overall workloads remain broadly flat, 12-month expectations point to modest growth ahead, particularly in infrastructure.

QUARTERLY CONSTRUCTION OUTPUT GROWTH MASKS ORDERS SLIDE ([see story here](#))

UK construction output grew by 1.2% in the second quarter, driven by gains in new work and repair and maintenance. But latest orders figures suggest there could be a slowing down in construction activity ahead as the industry braces itself for a tough Autumn Budget. Latest output figures from the **ONS** showed a return to modest construction growth of 0.3% in June, reversing part of May's 0.5% dip. The growth came solely from a 1.2% uplift in repair and maintenance, with new work slipping 0.4%. Between April and June, new work was up 1.1% while repair and maintenance rose 1.4% compared to the first quarter. Private housing repair and maintenance was the biggest driver, jumping 3.7% in June, while non-housing repair and maintenance grew 0.8%. However, new orders took a hit, falling 8.3% (£976m) in Q2, led by weaker demand in infrastructure and private commercial work.

DOUBTS REMAIN ABOUT PACE OF RECOVERY ([see story here](#))

The Q2 2025 Market View report from **Mace Consult** says the pace of recovery remains uncertain, highlighting signs that the UK construction industry is beginning to respond to government investment. New orders and infrastructure funding are starting to generate some momentum, but the pace of recovery remains uncertain amid ongoing delivery challenges, the firm says.

STARTS, AWARDS AND APPROVALS ALL PLUMMET ([see story here](#))

Latest analysis from Glenigan shows that in the three-month period May to July the value of construction project starts in the UK fell by 20% compared to the previous three months and by 17% compared with 2024 levels. Not only are project starts in decline, so are contract awards, indicating that starts will continue to decline. The value of main contract awards declined by 26% in the May-July period compared to the preceding three month, and by 39% compared to last year. Even worse news: detailed planning approvals fell by 55% when measured against the previous three months, and 36% down on 2024 figures. While there's reasonable activity in the sub-£100m category of construction contracts, it is the major projects that have stalled, as the graphs below indicate.

UK TIMBER IMPORTS DIP ([see story here](#))

Latest statistics from trade body **Timber Development UK** (TDUK) show that total imports of timber and panel product reached 4.76 million m³ in the first six months of 2025, down 2.9% from 4.90 million m³ in the first half of 2024. The bulk of the decline was driven by weaker demand in the second quarter of the year, with Q2 volumes 159,000 m³ lower than in Q2 2024, outweighing a small increase of 16,000 m³ in the first quarter.

BIDDING HEATS UP AS COMPETITION INTENSIFIES ([see story here](#))

A slowdown in new project orders is intensifying pressure on tender prices across the UK construction industry, cost consultants are warning. **Rider Levett Bucknall UK** (RLB) has lowered its tender price index (TPI) forecasts for 2025 to a weighted average of 3.03% from 3.22% three months ago in its latest quarterly *Construction Market Intelligence* report. Despite ONS data showing overall construction output up year-on-year to June 2025, growth remains patchy, with gains largely driven by repair and maintenance work activity and a slight recovery of house-building. New orders show only limited expansion outside of infrastructure. The volumes of work across different sectors continue to be mixed in regional markets, depending on proportions of public and private sector work, as well as local economic market development. The lack of new orders is forcing contractors into tighter, more competitive bidding, with downstream risks for project delivery.