

INNOVATION

[AUGMENTED STONE PROTOTYPE ON SHOW AT EARLS COURT \(see story here\)](#)

The Stone Demonstrator is a three-storey prototype building shell on show at the Earls Court Development site in London, an off-site installation from the **Design Museum's** Future Observatory research programme. The 6.5m tall structure is a low-carbon construction prototype that puts pre-tensioned stone building techniques to the test. It has been designed by architecture practice **Groupwork** with engineers **Webb Yates** and **Arup**, and built from prefabricated natural stone – now called augmented stone – from The **Stonemasonry Company**.

It is a prototype that reduces carbon emissions by approximately 70% compared to a reinforced concrete frame and 90% compared to a steel frame, consisting of stone blocks connected by steel tendons and compressed to create pre-tensioned beams and columns. Floorplates are a mix of pre-tensioned stone slabs, combined with timber joists and a roof of dowel-laminated timber (DLT). The structure has a self-supporting facade of stone bricks, 90% lower in carbon emissions than London's vernacular of fired clay bricks.

TECHNOLOGY

[TECH TO COMBAT CABLE THEFT \(see story here\)](#)

First Response Group (FRG) has unveiled FRG Tremors, a seismic detection system that senses tampering to both laid cable and cable drums in storage, and tracks stolen cable in real time. The system uses seismic sensors to monitor vibration, tilt and movement around cabling and associated infrastructure. When tampering is detected, an encrypted signal is transmitted to FRG's 24-hour control centre, which alerts nominated response teams and police. If material is removed, onboard GPS with jamming detection activates, enabling stolen cable to be tracked in real time until recovery by law enforcement. Each unit operates autonomously on a long-life battery for up to three years and is engineered to function in remote or exposed environments where traditional CCTV and motion sensors struggle, such as along railway lines, renewable energy sites, compounds storing material awaiting installation or empty commercial properties awaiting reoccupation.

EQUIPMENT

[AGGREKO LANDS SIZEWELL C POWER SUPPLY DEAL \(see story here\)](#)

Aggreko has secured a multi-year contract as the primary power provider for the construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk, supplying a low-emission, low-noise multi-megawatt power package for the construction phase. This includes Stage V generators incorporating battery energy storage system (BESS) technologies, with Aggreko Remote Monitoring (ARM) transmitting operating data. Asset management and data-driven reporting will also be available via Aggreko Connect, throughout the project's lifetime.

[THOMAS BOW MOVES INTO FUEL DELIVERY \(see story here\)](#)

Nottingham-based civil engineering firm **Thomas Bow** has launched a new mobile fuelling service for off-highway machinery in the region, after investing £60,000 in a custom-built a 900-litre capacity, Isuzu fuel truck. The company's Fuel on the Go service is aimed at builders, landscape and agricultural contractors, civil engineering firms and plant hire businesses. The pay-as-you-go service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, predominantly servicing the East Midlands.

[DECOM LAUNCHES ONSHORE CHOP SAW \(see story here\)](#)

Subsea cutting technology specialist **Decom Engineering** has a new range of hydraulic chop saws aimed at onshore civil engineering and demolition projects. The new TorqCut series is a range of excavator-mounted attachments, with an initial four models that are capable of cutting materials up to 32-inch diameter. The new range can be fitted to excavators from four to 24 tonnes and is suitable for steel and concrete pile cutting, especially in urban or restricted-access sites where low noise and vibration is critical, and onshore pipeline and wellhead abandonment decommissioning work.

[FIRST 80-TONNE SANY EXCAVATOR DELIVERED \(see story here\)](#)

Chinese construction machinery manufacturer **Sany** has sold its first 80-tonne digger in the UK. **Heritage Quarry Group** has bought a Sany SY750H excavator, the first machine of this size that the Chinese manufacturer has sold into the UK. It is their third Sany machine, following the purchase of a 40-tonne SY390H and a 50-tonne SY500H within the last 12 months.

[MONSTER SHAFT-SINKER KICKS OFF GRAIN-TILBURY POWER TUNNEL \(see story here\)](#)

Europe's largest-diameter vertical shaft sinking machine has begun work in Tilbury as **Ferrovial BEMO JV** begins sinking the first access shaft for **National Grid's** new Thames power tunnel, the £230m Grain to Tilbury upgrade – a central strand of the Great Grid Upgrade. The 2.2km, 400kV cable tunnel will replace the ageing 1960s Thames Cable Tunnel between Tilbury and Gravesend, which has reached the end of its working life. The scheme, beginning with a 15m internal diameter, 48m-deep structure now being sunk from Tilbury will include a second matching shaft at Gravesend. It is the largest VSM ever supplied by tunnelling machine maker **Herrenknecht** and the biggest of its type in Europe. The system is fully operated from the surface, removing the need for operatives to enter the shaft, allowing excavation to proceed inside a water-filled environment.

[FLEET EXPANSION FOR CONCRETE SUPPLIER \(see story here\)](#)

Wakefield based **24/7 Concrete & Aggregates** has added a fourth **Bay-Lynx** Titan volumetric mixer to its fleet, meaning that it now has eight volumetric mixers in total, increasing its capacity to serve the construction sites of Yorkshire. Established in 2023, 24/7 Concrete has already developed a local reputation supplying everything from home extensions and driveways to major industrial slabs.

MATERIALS/USES/METHODS

CLT PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION BREAKTHROUGH ([see story here](#))

Research commissioned by **Willmott Dixon** has eliminated a technical gap that has created uncertainty and delays in the use of cross-laminated timber (CLT) projects in the construction industry. Previously, all CLT projects required individual technical assessments. Now, there are certified solutions for projects using cross-laminated timber (CLT) and **Siderise** cavity barriers in both wall and floor applications. The testing programme was conducted at Siderise's Innovation Centre with support from Willmott Dixon and CLT manufacturer **KLH**, and examined three critical interface scenarios that appear across CLT construction projects, with all three passed:

- CLT wall interfaces in vertical configuration with EW-CB 30 Cavity Barrier (tested to EN1366-4)
- CLT floor and wall interfaces in horizontal configuration with EW-CB 30 Cavity Barrier (tested to EN1366-4)
- CLT floor and wall interfaces in horizontal configuration with RH25 90/30 Cavity Barrier for rainscreen applications (tested to TGD19 prEN1364-6)

WIENERBERGER OPENS CONCRETE TILE PLANT IN KENT ([see story here](#))

Wienerberger UK & Ireland has started production of concrete tiles at its Smeed Dean brick works site in Sittingbourne, Kent. The 7,800 sqm production facility is their first concrete tile factory in the south of England and has the capacity to produce 94 million roof tiles a year. Manufacturing both Danum TLE large format concrete tiles and plain concrete tiles on two production lines, the factory will complement existing tile factories in Yorkshire.

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY**SOLAR PANELS PRESENT GROWING FIRE RISK** ([see story here](#))

New research from business insurer **QBE** reveals UK fire services faced a fire involving a solar panel once almost every two days in 2024, marking a 60% increase in the past two years. Data collected by QBE from freedom of information (FoI) requests to UK fire services in August 2025 also reveal that fires are rising faster than the rate of installations, which could indicate incorrect installation or maintenance.

NORFOLK ROADWORKS SMASH CARBON TARGETS ([see story here](#))

A project to resurface a stretch of road in East Anglia is setting new standards for carbon reduction, **National Highways** says, having challenged contractors **Heidelberg Materials** and **WSP** to resurface the A47 between Acle and Great Yarmouth in a low carbon way. The result is a new structural layer of the road that's made from more than 90% recycled materials, laid using battery-powered machinery. With a recycling plant close-by, the project is predicted to save 400 tonnes of CO₂ compared to traditional methods. The change in design specification to use **EvoBuild** foamed asphalt resulted in a dramatic increase in recycled content, providing substantial savings in CO₂ emissions compared with hot mix asphalt as its production requires significantly less energy.

RICS WARNS OF SUSTAINABILITY SLOWDOWN ([see story here](#))

A report from the **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors** (RICS) reveals a slowdown in global demand growth for sustainable buildings and a lack of progress in carbon measurement across construction projects. The RICS **2025 Sustainability Report**, based on input from more than 3,500 real estate and construction professionals across 36 countries, warns that momentum behind sustainable development risks stalling without stronger policy intervention and accelerated skills development.

UK'S FIRST LOW-CARBON TRACK RENEWAL ([see story here](#))

1,150 yards of plain line track have been replaced on a stretch of railway line in south London using a suite of low carbon, sustainable materials – a UK first that will help **Network Rail** contribute to its net zero commitment, successfully delivering the UK's first low-carbon track renewal combining green steel rail, low-carbon concrete, recycled ballast and renewable biofuelled trains to cut emissions without compromising performance. Led by the **Southern Renewals Enterprise** (SRE), the project saw **VolkerRail** renew track between Honor Oak Park and Forest Hill using innovative new products developed by **Network Rail Supply Chain Operations** (SCO). The track was fully welded, stressed, and handed back early at line speed, demonstrating that sustainability and operational excellence can go hand in hand.

CONCRETE TRIALS SHOW VIABILITY OF RECYCLING FINES ([see story here](#))

A UK project trialling recycled concrete fines has been described as a 'breakthrough' in sustainable cement innovation. Concrete fines have traditionally been regarded as a waste product but putting them back into the mix, and thus reduce embedded carbon, has now been shown to work. The cross-industry trial, funded by **Innovate UK** and led by the **Materials Processing Institute** (MPI), forms part of **UK Research and Innovation's** (UKRI) 'Contracts for Innovation: Decarbonising Concrete' programme.

SIZEWELL C TO REUSE RECYCLED CONCRETE FROM SIZEWELL A ([see story here](#))

Contractors building the Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk are set to reuse more than 15,000 tonnes of recycled concrete from the turbine alternator plinths at the now defunct Sizewell A plant. The turbine hall at Sizewell A has been demolished as part of the site's ongoing decommissioning, led by **Nuclear Restoration Services** (NRS). All recycled materials have been tested and transported just a few hundred metres up the coast to Sizewell C's main construction area (MCA), where they are being repurposed as sub-bases for various foundation platforms, saving money as well as carbon.

Cement producer calls for mandatory EPDs ([see story here](#))

Environmental product declarations should be made mandatory on all UK construction projects, according to Swiss cement company, **Holcim**. They believe environmental product declarations (EPDs) are essential to making progress towards national net zero targets and should be a legal requirement in the construction industry, arguing that EPDs, independently verified

declarations that detail a product's environmental impact, should be written into regulations and legislation. Doing so would eliminate greenwashing and support smarter, data-driven decision-making across the built environment.

TRAINING, RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYMENT

[MOBILISING THE RAIL SECTOR DATA SCIENCE & AI APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME \(see story here\)](#)

GBRX and **NSAR** have partnered to launch a new sector Data Science & Artificial Intelligence Apprenticeship Programme. It is designed to develop applied technical skills directly in the railway system and to support employers as they take steps into advanced data and AI with greater purpose and competence.

[PLANT-HIRE ASSOCIATION INVESTS IN SIMULATOR \(see story here\)](#)

The **Construction Plant-hire Association** (CPA) has bought a plant simulator, allowing users to experience, with a reasonable degree of authenticity, what it is like to drive a digger, dumper truck, telehandler or tower crane. It has three LED screens that provide real-time simulation and can be used with a virtual reality headset to produce a 360-degree view. The CPA plans to take it to schools, colleges and careers events nationwide to raise awareness about plant operating and encourage young people to consider construction plant as a career path.

[IMMIGRATION RAID FINDS ILLEGAL WORKERS \(see story here\)](#)

Arrests were made following an immigration enforcement raid at a **Vistry** site in East Sussex recently. A Home Office immigration enforcement team and Sussex Police officers visited the job where they detained 17 men of Albanian, Georgian and Indian nationalities deemed to be working illegally. A civil penalty referral notice was issued to the employer with fines of up to £60,000 per worker if found to have employed illegal workers. Vistry stated that the issue was with sub-contractors used on site, who have been contacted, and any failing to comply with requirements on site will be suspended.

[ECITB LAUNCHES QUALIFICATION FOR SUPPORT OPERATIVES \(see story here\)](#)

The **Engineering Construction Industry Training Board** (ECITB) is inviting colleges and training providers in England to deliver a new Level 2 certificate in supporting engineering construction operations, designed to prepare candidates for employment as support operatives. The qualification has to be completed in its entirety within a college or training centre that will then enable progression into a workplace. It will verify that learners have been shown how to work safely in an engineering construction environment; that they can prepare work areas, tools, materials and equipment; perform basic marking out and basic shaping activities; support the assembly, removal and dismantling of components and reinstate the work area after engineering construction activities. They will also be able to interpret and follow documentation and procedures, maintain working relationships and communicate effectively.

[JOINERY FIRM HALTS APPRENTICE PROGRAMME OVER SKILLS REFORMS \(see story here\)](#)

A leading joinery specialist has paused its apprenticeship programme in protest against government plans to reform training which it says "are not fit for purpose." Staircase and door manufacturer **Stairways Midlands** has been forced into action by controversial plans from **Skills England** to slash the duration of carpentry and joinery apprenticeships from 25 months to around eight. Other moves include altering final trainee assessments to allow organisations to "sample" only a portion of the knowledge, skills and behaviours criteria to determine an apprentice's competence – rather than requiring them to demonstrate they meet all of them. The company said the shift would create a "race to the bottom" in training quality.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

[TRU WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR CONSIDERATE CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES \(see story here\)](#)

The Transpennine Route Upgrade's (TRU) **West Alliance** has won 'The Most Outstanding Award' from the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) in its National Site Awards. The Alliance is undertaking major rail upgrades on sections of the Transpennine route between Manchester and Leeds. The award recognises its "exceptional" performance across the scheme's Code of Considerate Practice, which sets standards for how construction projects treat their workforce, protect the environment, and engage with local communities. Beyond construction excellence, the wider TRU programme has delivered significant social value to local communities, with 410 apprentices currently working on the project and over 64,000 children engaged through STEAM education programmes. The project has invested £813 million locally – whilst generating £2.2 billion in social value for the region.

[GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT ROLE IN PLACEMAKING AND FOSTERING LOCAL IDENTITY ACROSS BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS \(see story here\)](#)

The community rail movement is playing a leading role in the transformation of railways and stations into vibrant, inclusive, culturally rich community assets delivering significant social, economic and environmental value, a new report shows. Placemaking projects co-produced with local people are empowering communities to shape local environments and embed pride, heritage and identity into railway spaces, while also breaking down barriers to rail use. *Community rail: placemaking and local identity*, produced by **Community Rail Network** with support from **Rail Delivery Group** (RDG), highlights that community rail's local knowledge and relationships with other community groups and partners is crucial in enabling rail to enrich lives and strengthen communities through thoughtful, collaborative placemaking.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

[HOUSING COMPANY IGNORED POWER TOOL VIBRATION RISK \(see story here\)](#)

An East Midlands social housing provider has been fined after multiple workers were diagnosed with vibration related injuries. The **Health & Safety Executive** (HSE) launched an investigation after it received more than 10 reports of vibration related ill-health in a short period of time. The HSE investigation found that many of the company's employees were exposed to vibration in their day to day work, including bricklayers, joiners, electricians and plasterers. While work was varied, all included

extensive use of power tools, ranging from drills and impact drivers to vibrating plates and road breakers, over an extended period of time. The company had not properly assessed or controlled worker's exposure to vibration.

INDUSTRY-LEADING SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE HITS 10,000 VISITORS ([see story here](#))

The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) **TRUST** centre, the first purpose-built rail safety centre of its kind in the North of England, has now surpassed 10,000 visitors. Launched in 2023, the facility enables rail workers to experience real life safety-critical scenarios in a safe environment that offers a platform for discussion and an opportunity for incidents to be analysed. The innovative approach was brought to life in partnership with **Active Training Team** (ATT), where actors deliver an accurate representation of events that could lead to dangerous incidents on the railway when work is being carried out. From life at home to operating machinery, every base is covered.

NETWORK RAIL RE-ENERGISES WEBSITE AS RAIL SAFETY EDUCATION IS PUT ONTO CURRICULUM ([see story here](#))

All school children across England are to receive life-saving rail safety education when the subject becomes a mandatory part of the PHSE in the national curriculum from September 2026. Ahead of the compulsory introduction, **Network Rail** has relaunched its **Switched On** website, which provides teachers with free curriculum-linked materials designed to teach children how to keep themselves safe in a rail setting and reduce the number of railway safety incidents involving young people. The website offers extensive targeted content across the three key stage educational groups.

Health & Safety in action ([see story here](#))

Dramatic footage here of a crane load falling at the Hinkley Point C nuclear construction site in Somerset. The incident occurred in early November when two assembled formwork shutters were stacked and lifted together. During the lift the bottom shutter broke in half and the second shutter fell to the ground below where an exclusion zone was in place and no personnel were injured.

CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL

TRAVIS PERKINS UNDER FIRE FOR CHANGE IN PAYMENT TERMS ([see story here](#))

Builders' merchant **Travis Perkins** has caused uproar in the industry by extending its standard payment terms to 60 days from the end of the invoice month. The **National Federation of Roofing Contractors** (NFRC) says the move undermines progress the construction industry has made in improving payment practices. NFRC says that the entire construction sector has worked hard over recent years to shorten payment periods to improve productivity and stability and reduce insolvencies.

MAGAZINES POSE AS MAIN CONTRACTORS TO PESTER SUBBIES ([see story here](#))

Subcontractors and suppliers are being pestered by media companies posing as main contractors in a bid to sell them ineffective advertising space. The ruse is for small media companies to promise main contractors and clients a site feature in their publications and websites in return for access to a project's supplier list. Sales people then swoop on the lists and pressure supply chain firms to take out paid adverts by inferring that the feature is endorsed by the main contractor.

CIS FRAUD CLAMPDOWN PUTS DIRECTORS IN THE FIRING LINE ([see story here](#))

HMRC is set to unleash a major crackdown on organised CIS abuse after the Chancellor used the Budget to put directors in the firing line for supply chain tax fraud. The move marks the toughest shake-up of the scheme in two decades and targets firms that turn a blind eye to "too good to be true" operators. From April 2026, any business judged to have known or should have known it was tied to fraudulent transactions will instantly lose their gross payment status for at least five years. Directors will also face personal penalties as HMRC shifts responsibility straight to the top of the chain. Under the new regime to be written into the Finance Bill 2025-26 companies engaging with fraudulent labour suppliers will become automatically liable for the lost tax, with penalties of up to 30% of the evaded amount hitting both the business and its directors or connected individuals.

GOVERNMENT SCRAPS LANDFILL TAX REFORMS ([see story here](#))

The government has abandoned plans to converge the two rates of landfill tax after an industry backlash. Reforms were put out to consultation earlier this year, proposing abolition of the reduced rate by 2030. Under the proposals, landfill tax would have risen to £126 per tonne, compared with cost for non-contaminated waste from new build sites is currently priced at £4 per tonne. House-builders warned this would add an average of £15,000 to the cost of building a new home. It was also calculated to add £1.26bn to the cost of development projects in London and £437m to the cost of HS2. Respondents also noted the proposed reforms could encourage more visible forms of waste crime such as illegal dumping. Given the uproar, plans to abolish the lower rate have now been dropped. Instead the government will increase the standard rate by Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation and the lower rate by the cash amount of the standard rate increase, maintaining the differential in cash terms.

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

HSE CONSULTS ON TIGHTER ASBESTOS REGULATIONS ([see story here](#))

The **Health & Safety Executive** (HSE) has launched a consultation on proposals to improve the application of the Control of Asbestos Regulations and guidance around asbestos management, seeking views on three proposals:

- to ensure independence and impartiality of roles in the four-stage clearance process to further minimise the risk of exposure from asbestos to workers and building users after the removal of asbestos
- to improve the standard of asbestos surveys to ensure dutyholders have information they need to safely manage asbestos risks
- to clarify the type of work that constitutes work with asbestos, known as notifiable non-licensed work (NNLW).

The HSE said that the consultation was ‘particularly relevant’ to dutyholders, asbestos analysts, asbestos removal contractors, asbestos surveyors, and associated professions including facilities management and construction.

BSR TO BREAK FREE OF HSE IN LATE JANUARY ([see story here](#))

The Government has kicked off the final stage of the post-Grenfell safety shake-up with new laws to strip the **Building Safety Regulator** out of the **Health and Safety Executive** and relaunch it as a standalone watchdog from January next year. The Building Safety Regulator (Establishment of New Body and Transfer of Functions etc.) Regulations 2026 have just been laid before Parliament, setting 27 January 2026 as the date the new body formally takes control of high-rise safety in England and Wales. The move ends HSE’s three-year spell running the regulator and creates a permanent corporate body reporting directly to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

NUCLEAR TASKFORCE CALLS FOR REGULATORY REFORM ([see story here](#))

The **Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce** has published its final report, calling for a reset of overly complex nuclear regulations, with 47 recommendations for government to speed up delivery, reduce costs and strengthen safety. It says overly complex regulation in the UK has contributed to the “relative decline” in the UK’s global leadership position in nuclear. The 162-page review is titled *Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025: Enabling nuclear delivery through regulatory reform*. Recommendations include establishing a ‘one-stop shop’ for nuclear decisions and streamlining regulation to remove duplication and improve proportionality avoiding overly bureaucratic, costly processes while improving safety standards. The report estimates that its proposed reforms could save tens of billions in nuclear decommissioning costs alone, as well as cutting energy costs for consumers and driving more investment into the UK. Among its findings directly relating to construction, it says that recent nuclear projects have been expensive and behind schedule partly because of “unnecessary over-specialisation for solutions, ranging from simple components like bolts to complex structures such as cranes, where commercial-off-the-shelf items could have been used instead”.

CONSOLIDATED GUIDANCE FOR CRANES NEAR RAILWAYS ([see story here](#))

The **Construction Plant-hire Association’s** Crane Interest Group (CIG) and Tower Crane Interest Group (TCIG) have collaborated with Network Rail to produce a 58-page guide called *Requirements for Lifting Equipment Adjacent to Railways Controlled by Network Rail*. Until now, guidance in this area was split between two separate CPA publications – CPA1402 (mobile cranes) and CPA1801 (tower cranes). Both have now been superseded and combined into a single document providing consistent requirements for all crane types operating near railways.

MARKET NEWS/TRENDS

RAIL

CAPGEMINI SHARES ‘RETHINKING RAIL’ WHITE PAPER ([see story here](#))

Consulting, technology and digital transformation specialist **Capgemini** has shared a white paper on the changing face of the rail industry, looking at how it can overcome a range of challenges – from aging infrastructure to increased competition from other transport modes. They suggest that, in order to address these challenges, rail must “level up”, pointing to the need to run more efficiently at a lower cost, make better use of existing infrastructure, embrace emerging smart IoT and digitalised systems, and be more interoperable and standardised.

NETWORK RAIL LAUNCHES PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY ([see story here](#))

Network Rail has launched a new property development company with a target to build 40,000 new homes and 10 million sq ft of commercial space over the next decade. The company, called Platform4, will develop brownfield rail land and has already identified four sites in Newcastle, Manchester, Cambridge and Nottingham. It has been created from the merger of **London & Continental Railways** and Network Rail’s Property Development operations. Both development teams have a proven track record in delivering housing, commercial and infrastructure-led schemes, with over 7,000 homes delivered in the last year.

BUILDERS ‘SPEECHLESS’ AT AUTOMATIC APPROVAL FOR HOUSING BY STATIONS ([see story here](#))

House-building planning applications near well-connected train or tram stations will receive a default ‘yes’, the government is promising. The **Ministry of Housing** says that any housing development near a station in England will be approved. In addition, any local authority in England will now be required to tell the government when they intend to reject new housing developments of 150 homes or more, enabling the secretary of state time to overrule local decision making more quickly.

£7BN EAST WEST RAIL PLAN RAMPED UP IN DESIGN RETHINK ([see story here](#))

East West Rail has ramped up original plans for the Oxford–Cambridge route with a far bigger station-building plan. More than 80 changes have been dropped into the £7bn scheme as it heads towards a Development Consent Order, with fresh stations, new entrances and a completely reworked service pattern forming the spine of the overhaul. The biggest step-change in the design rethink hits the Marston Vale Line where nine older stations will be replaced by four larger modern stations.

RAIL DIRECTOR – NOVEMBER ISSUE ([here](#))

A mixed bag of articles, with a number looking at digital signalling for the future.

HIGHWAYS

BITUMEN: A POSITIVE INDICATOR AT LAST ([see story here](#))

While many economic indicators within the construction indicator continue to give cause for gloom, here is one to please: 15% more surface dressing work was carried out in 2025 than in 2024. Figures from the **Road Emulsion Association** (REA) show that around 44.4 million square metres of surface dressing – enough to treat 4,340 miles of road – was applied over the April-to-September preventative maintenance season in 2025, compared to 38.5 million in 2024. This year’s manufacturing, sale and use of bitumen emulsions for surface dressing were also up 25% on 2023’s 35.3 million square metres. However,

2023 saw the lowest reported volume since records began in 1978, meaning current figures are still 32% below 2012's 64.4 million square metres.

OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

MOD ROLLS OUT £9BN PLAN TO FIX FORCES HOUSING ([see story here](#))

Britain's armed forces housing is set for a major overhaul under a new £9bn Defence Housing Strategy that will see more than 40,000 military homes modernised or replaced while surplus MoD land is released for over 100,000 new homes. The new 10-year plan will upgrade thousands of service family homes with new kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems, while 14,000 of the worst-condition properties will be substantially refurbished or replaced. The new investment is underpinned by the government's landmark **Annington Homes** deal, completed earlier this year, which brought 36,000 military homes back into public ownership after nearly three decades in private hands.

£2.7BN SUNK ON SCRAPPED TRANSPORT PROJECTS ([see story here](#))

A National Audit Office report reveals that the government has written off £2.7bn over the past two years on cancelled transport projects. Since 2023, several of the Department for Transport's major projects have been cancelled due to affordability pressures and changes in government priorities, with amounts written off from cancelled road and rail projects totalling £2.7bn, including money spent designing and starting to deliver activity that has now been stopped, and the reduction in the value of assets.

MPS CALL FOR RADICAL OVERHAUL OF INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY ([see story here](#))

A cross-party group of MPs has warned that systemic failures in government project delivery risk derailing Britain's infrastructure ambitions unless ministers act fast. In a new report, *Building a Better Future*, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Project Delivery (APPGPD) calls for a radical shift in the way Whitehall plans and delivers major national projects. The inquiry found too many schemes fall into a "valley of death" between political ambition and delivery reality, with projects delayed, over budget, and losing momentum through bureaucracy and ministerial churn. The report urges ministers to strengthen project skills across Whitehall, protect long-term schemes from short-term politics, and establish a National Infrastructure Delivery Skills Roadmap to tackle the talent gap. Other recommendations include mandatory project management training for senior civil servants, giving the National Infrastructure and Systems Transformation Authority (NISTA) powers to oversee projects from policy to completion and much earlier supplier involvement in procurement.

ANGLESEY TO GET FIRST SMALL MODULAR REACTORS ([see story here](#))

The government has announced that publicly-owned Great British Energy-Nuclear will build three small modular reactors (SMRs) at Wylfa, but the site could potentially host up to eight mini reactors. Subject to final contract, Rolls-Royce will be the supplier, with activity on the site in 2026 and aiming to be supplying power to the grid from the mid-2030s. The £2.5bn project is expected to support up to 3,000 jobs in the local community at peak construction.

RESEARCH REVEALS WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO UNLOCK PRIVATE FINANCE FOR UK INFRASTRUCTURE ([see story here](#))

The research, commissioned by **AtkinsRéalis**, warns that positive sentiment represents a finite window of opportunity. While 65 per cent of investors are currently committed to UK infrastructure, only 19 per cent would strongly prioritise the UK over other regions and 64 per cent have walked away from UK projects because of unattractive business cases. As global competition for capital intensifies, the UK must act decisively to convert positive sentiment into tangible private finance for projects.

MANCHESTER MAYOR BETS £1BN ON 'GOOD GROWTH FUND' PROJECT DRIVE ([see story here](#))

Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham has unveiled a £1bn regeneration push that will see 30 major projects rolled out across all 10 boroughs. A first £400m wave was recently signed-off by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, with three schemes lined up for each district in a decade-long construction drive. Together the schemes will help trigger nearly 3,000 new homes, 22,000 jobs and 2m sq ft of employment space and unlocking a further £1.3bn in private capital. The cash sits inside the new GM Good Growth Fund, backed by the **Greater Manchester Pension Fund** and designed to pump-prime stalled sites before recycling repaid loans back into the pipeline.

WELSH GOVERNMENT SETS OUT CONSTRUCTION STRATEGY ([see story here](#))

Highlights of the Welsh government's new construction strategy include a commitment to project bank accounts, prioritising retrofit over new build and promoting offsite prefabrication of large building components. The *Built Environment Mission Statement* sets out our strategic vision for "a resilient, innovative and socially responsible construction sector in Wales". The *Digital Action Plan for Construction*, developed in partnership with **Constructing Excellence in Wales** (CEW), outlines key priorities to help drive productivity, improve project delivery, and support the development of future-ready skills across the sector.

GOVERNMENT GOES FOR £33BN HEATHROW THIRD RUNWAY PLAN ([see story here](#))

The Government is backing Heathrow Airport Limited's (HAL) 'superhub' third runway expansion plans. The £33bn proposals include £21bn for the runway alongside £12bn for associated terminal infrastructure, and include major works to the M25 costing £1.25bn. HAL will also invest £15bn into the existing airport to modernise and upgrade current facilities- these works are independent of a third runway and will go ahead regardless of a planning decision for expansion.

TRENDS

BUYERS REPORT FASTEST ACTIVITY DECLINE IN FIVE YEARS ([see story here](#))

The latest bellwether *S&P Global UK Construction Purchasing Managers' Index* painted a grim picture of weakening order books and little good news ahead as construction braced itself for the budget. The index registered 44.1 in October, down

from 46.2 in September and below the 50 no- change mark for the tenth consecutive month. October marked the longest period of continuous decline since the global financial crisis more than 15 years ago. Civil engineering led the slide (index at 35.4), with business activity falling sharply with firms blaming a lack of new work to replace completed projects.

CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT SINKS TO 24-YEAR LOW ([see story here](#))

Latest government figures show the construction workforce fell 1.3% in the third quarter to 2.05 million, marking a 15% collapse in capacity since a peak just before Covid. This amounts to an exodus of 367,000 jobs. Economists are warning that a combination of the housing downturn, weak commercial work and higher employer costs have hit recruitment hard. Directly employed staff are now falling faster than the self-employed — reversing the trend seen during the pandemic when thousands of freelancers exited the industry.

CRACKS EXPOSED IN UK'S CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE ([see story here](#))

A report by **Oxford Economics** for the **Construction Plant-hire Association** warns that skills shortages, falling investment and delivery delays are threatening to derail the government's growth plans. The report, titled *Half-built Britain: Unlocking the nation's infrastructure growth plans*, warns that "announcements are outpacing delivery capacity", with too few projects fully costed or shovel-ready. Flagship projects, from new hospitals and homes to airport expansions, are at risk of grinding to a halt, the report warns.

CONSTRUCTION HANGS ON TO GROWTH AS NEW ORDERS rebound ([see story here](#))

Construction output crept up again in September as a jump in new work offset another slowdown in repair and maintenance. Latest official figures from the **ONS** show output rose by just 0.2% on the month, driven by a 0.7% uplift in new work but dragged back by a 0.5% fall in repair and maintenance. It is the third sluggish output reading in a row and adds up to a stagnant 0.1% rise overall in the third quarter. There was brighter news in new orders, which climbed nearly 10% over the quarter — helped by a rebound in private commercial and industrial projects.