

INNOVATION

BRIDGE STRIKE TESTING AT THE GLOBAL CENTRE OF RAIL EXCELLENCE [\(see story here\)](#)

Led by the **Rail and Station Innovation Company** (Rasic), GCRE will be the site for a trial of 'Bridge Bouncer', a new roadside safety system designed to reduce the number of over-height vehicles striking low railway bridges. The system delivers clear, timely alerts to drivers before they reach the point of risk, shifting bridge-strike prevention from static signs to a more active intervention that supports better decision making.

TECHNOLOGY

AMEY LAUNCHES NEXT GENERATION SIGNALLING SOLUTION [\(see story here\)](#)

Amey has officially launched Tessera, a cutting-edge digital signalling system designed to upgrade and future-proof rail infrastructure across the UK and globally. It says that Tessera delivers seamless integration, enhanced safety, and operational efficiency, modernising networks without interrupting day-to-day operations. Built with modular, future ready architecture, Tessera integrates seamlessly across legacy, modern, and next generation signalling platforms. It connects into existing systems to minimise disruption, while durable hardware and robust software deliver reliable performance with minimal maintenance. Amey's end-to-end partnership approach provides full lifecycle support, from planning and delivery through to aftercare.

SITEWALK PROPELS DALUX TO EUROPEAN BIM LEADERSHIP [\(see story here\)](#)

Danish construction technology company **Dalux** claims to have become Europe's largest BIM software provider after 10 years of hypergrowth. With its building information management (BIM) software now used on 7,800 construction projects in the UK, and 1.7 million active accounts across Europe, Dalux reckons it has overtaken other major European suppliers such as Think Project, Asite and Nemetschek, if not some of the larger US suppliers.

RAIL SECTOR ISSUED WITH LANDSLIP MONITOR ALERT [\(see story here\)](#)

Lineside monitoring equipment used on **Network Rail** managed infrastructure may not be able to detect the failure of slopes in some circumstances, the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) has warned. RAIB has issued a safety alert warning that slope monitoring equipment may not provide data as expected to support safety decision-making, particularly during extreme weather conditions. The issue came to light after a landslip in the Lake District last month.

EQUIPMENT

SUMITOMO PLOTS UK MARKET ENTRY [\(see story here\)](#)

Japanese manufacturer **Sumitomo Construction Machinery Co Ltd** (SCM), a subsidiary of Sumitomo Heavy Industries (SHI), is set to introduce its range of hydraulic excavators into the UK market next year. Sumitomo has been here before but always in joint venture or with other badges on – notably with Case New Holland or – imported through grey channels. Now UK contractors and hire companies will be able to buy Sumitomo excavators, with full manufacturer support and branding.

MATERIALS/USES/METHODS

COMPOSITES UK AND RIA JOIN FORCES [\(see story here\)](#)

Composites UK and the **Railway Industry Association** (RIA) have announced a new collaborative initiative aimed at helping Network Rail better understand how it can expand the use of composite materials across the UK rail network, focused on identifying opportunities, challenges, and information needs that can support wider adoption of composite technologies in rail infrastructure. Composite materials are increasingly being used across sectors such as aerospace, automotive, and construction, but their potential within rail remains underutilised. This new initiative seeks to bridge that gap by bringing together expertise from across the composites and rail supply chains to create a clearer roadmap for implementation.

ZINC COATING PROMISES REVOLUTION FOR REINFORCED CONCRETE [\(see story here\)](#)

FibreCoat, a German materials technology company, has developed a new zinc-based coating that promises to transform civil and maritime construction. The coating is designed to provide exceptional protection against corrosion in concrete and other highly alkaline environments, where aluminium rapidly degrades. The new zinc-based coating's chemical stability in alkaline environments makes it uniquely suited to construction applications. Dispersing zinc coated fibres within concrete supports cathodic corrosion protection – a process that prevents embedded steel from rusting, which, in marine and coastal structures, could, subject to testing, extend the operational lifespan of assets by 20 to 30 years.

HEIDELBERG UK INJECTS CARBON DIOXIDE INTO CONCRETE MIX [\(see story here\)](#)

Heidelberg Materials is trialling its CarbonCure technology in ready-mixed concrete for the first time in England at its Greenwich concrete plant. The process involves injecting pure manufactured CO₂ into fresh concrete, where it undergoes a chemical reaction to become permanently mineralised, making hydration more efficient, delivering stronger concrete and locking in CO₂. It also allows producers to use an average of 5% less cement within the concrete mix, Heidelberg says, and can reduce the CO₂ associated with concrete by between seven and 11 kg/m³.

GIANT BRIDGE SLID ACROSS LIVE MOTORWAY [\(see story here\)](#)

HS2 engineers claimed a UK-first over the weekend when they successfully slid a 4,600-tonne viaduct across the M6 without closing the motorway. The 17 hour-long operation was the culmination of an epic three-stage process to assemble and install the 315-metre East deck of the M6 South viaduct, which will carry high-speed trains heading to Birmingham and further north. While the previous slide had required a weekend closure of the main carriageway, the team – led by HS2's main work contractor **Balfour Beatty VINCI** (BBV) – worked closely with **National Highways** to develop the 'fully restrained' process which allowed them to safely slide the final section above the moving traffic.

GEOPOLYMER STABILISATION FUTURE-PROOFS BLACKHEATH TUNNEL ([see story here](#))

Specialist ground engineering firm **Geobear** has completed major stabilisation and water-sealing works to restore Blackheath Tunnel to full rail traffic capacity. These repairs constituted part of a £10 million maintenance project on south east London's rail network between Blackheath and Charlton. The mile-long tunnel, first opened in 1849, had suffered progressive lining degradation over decades, leading to water ingress that washed out fine sediments from behind the brickwork. Persistent leakage damaged the brick face and overhead lines, while pooling water on the track corroded rails, contributing to delays for Southeastern passengers. **VolkerFitzpatrick**, the project's tier-one contractor, considered traditional methods, such as grouting or concrete lining, but dismissed them due to their high water requirements and the logistical challenges of transporting water inside the confined tunnel environment.

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY**SCOTTISH WATER COMMITS TO LOW CARBON THRESHOLD** ([see story here](#))

Scottish Water claims to be the first UK organisation to sign a pledge committing itself to buying a certain amount of low carbon concrete. The publicly-owned utility company has committed to around 30% of its current annual concrete usage being low carbon as part of an advance market commitment (AMC) led by **Innovate UK** and **Carbon Limiting Technologies**.

YORK MINSTER'S SOLAR PANEL SAVINGS ([see story here](#))

York Minster reports significant energy and cost savings within just six months of installation of rooftop solar panels. In the first six months since commissioning, a 184-panel solar array on the roof of York Minster has generated more than 42,000kWh of electricity, meeting more than 80% of the building's energy needs at peak, saving nearly £20,000 in electricity costs and offsetting eight tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

TRU SETS NEW BENCHMARK FOR SUSTAINABLE DELIVERY ([see story here](#))

The **Transpennine Route Upgrade** (TRU) has released its 2025 Sustainable Development Report, demonstrating a year of significant progress towards delivering a faster, greener, more reliable railway across the North, and leaving a long-lasting legacy in the communities it works in. Guided by its sustainability strategy, Our Guiding Compass, the programme has embedded long-term thinking into every aspect of delivery, from carbon reduction and habitat creation to job growth, customer experience and community partnerships.

RAIL INDUSTRY SETS NEW BENCHMARK FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE ([see story here](#))

For the third consecutive year, The **Rail Safety and Standards Board** (RSSB) has worked with **Climate Sense** to complete a cross-industry assessment of climate resilience, using a bespoke climate capacity diagnosis and development tool built specifically for the railway. The rail industry's adaptive capacity—the ability of organisations to adjust, respond, and evolve in the face of climate risks—has risen sharply. All 51 participants in the assessment are now at or approaching Response Level 3 (Efficient Management), marking over a 50 per cent increase in sector-wide activity compared to 2023.

TRAINING, RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYMENT**UK LACKS THE SKILLS TO HIT NET ZERO** ([see story here](#))

A report from the House of Commons energy security and net zero committee, **Workforce planning to deliver clean secure energy**, says that the government will only meet its 2030 or 2050 clean energy decarbonised building targets if there is significant new intervention in the workforce. It says that targeting consumer demand is necessary but not sufficient, and public funding to address the supply of skills directly is needed now. The UK needs an estimated 250,000 additional workers just to meet new housing targets, and many more for retrofit. After shocking failures in previous government-backed retrofit and insulation schemes, the committee calls for a new, nationally recognised, industry-backed construction and retrofit skills programme. The UK may need to import some specific skilled workers from overseas, at least in the short term, to meet its targets, it says.

JOBLESS YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET SIX-WEEK CONSTRUCTION COURSE ([see story here](#))

The government has unveiled plans to get more youngsters on Universal Credit into construction. Construction is one of the focus industries alongside health, social care and hospitality for the new £820m initiative. The government said jobless youngsters will “be referred to one of up to six pathways by their work coach: work, work experience, apprenticeship, wider training, learning or a workplace training programme with a guaranteed interview, designed in partnership with employers. As part of this training, young people will receive six weeks of training, work experience, and a guaranteed job interview, giving young people their first foot in the door towards meaningful employment.”

CITB CUTS MORE TRAINING FUNDS DESPITE CASH PILE ([see story here](#))

The **Construction Industry Training Board** has announced a sudden cut in training grants and funding for popular courses. CITB chiefs said the cuts were “due to the success” of Employer Networks and the New Entrant Support Team (NEST). The training body said demand for its services has grown by 36% over the last four years while the Levy rate had remained the same meaning that, at current levels, demand for CITB support will exceed its Levy income. Without action, CITB risks being unable to support any of these programmes. At March 2024 CITB was sat on a cash pile of £95m, which has since decreased to £79m. As a result of the cuts, there were calls in the industry to scrap CITB [reported here](#).

LIVERPOOL MAYOR SIGNS FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PARTNERSHIP ([see story here](#))

Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram has signed a first-of-its-kind training agreement to tackle an estimated shortfall of 9,000 building workers in the Liverpool City Region. The landmark collaboration between the **Liverpool Combined**

Authority (CA) and the CITB marks a major step forward in ensuring the region has the skilled workforce needed to deliver ambitious housing, retrofit and infrastructure projects. It is the first formal partnership under the CITB's new national initiative to create a connected Construction Skills Ecosystem across England, aligning national and regional priorities. The agreement allows the CA to analyse live data from building sites across the region to pinpoint skills gaps and train the estimated 9,000 extra workers needed over the next five years. A new Construction Workforce Development Unit will also be created to act as a broker between public authorities, employers and training providers. The pilot scheme will be tested and could be rolled out to other regional authorities.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LNER FUNDING HELPS TO BRING RIVER AIRE BACK TO LIFE ([see story here](#))

The **Aire Rivers Trust** is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the River Aire and its tributaries. Through its Riverfly programme, the charity works with local volunteer groups to monitor eight different groups of invertebrate life in the Yorkshire river, collecting data which pinpoints areas which have been impacted by pollution. Funding from the **LNER Customer and Community Investment Fund** (CCIF) has enabled the Trust to expand the Riverfly programme into Leeds, recruiting and training more volunteers. They collect vital data which highlights vulnerable areas and shapes future restoration projects.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

FIRE ENFORCEMENT NOTICE SERVED ON HINKLEY POINT JV ([see story here](#))

The **Office for Nuclear Regulation** (ONR) has served a fire enforcement notice on **Bylor JV** (Laing O'Rourke and Bouygues Travaux Publics) after identifying significant fire safety shortfalls at the Hinkley Point C nuclear construction site. Following a fire safety intervention, ONR inspectors identified that Bylor had failed to implement appropriate arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures.

NATIONAL DEVIATION FOR NEW VIRTUAL WORKSITE MARKER BOARD TECHNOLOGY ([see story here](#))

Tended has been granted a national deviation to the Rail Industry Rule Book by RSSB's Traffic Operation and Management Standards Committee, enabling the use of its virtual worksite marker boards technology for all on-track-plant-only possessions across the country, following successful industry trials on the East Coast Mainline with maintenance teams and the East Coast Digital Programme, marking a significant operational advance in rail possession management. The virtual worksite marker boards technology has been developed by Tended, Network Rail's Technical Authority and **Onwave** to replace the traditional manual placement of physical boards. Used to define worksite limits during rail infrastructure works for on-track plant, on-track machines, and engineering trains, the installation of physical boards is done by frontline teams, which makes it vulnerable to human error.

TRAPPED LOAD DRAGS LABOURER OVER SCAFFOLDING ([see story here](#))

A property refurbishment company and a roofing contractor were fined after a worker fell from scaffolding and suffered life-changing injuries. During an unplanned lifting operation, the load became trapped. When the worker attempted to free it, the released load caused him to be pulled over the edge of the scaffold. An HSE investigation found the roofing contractor failed to adequately plan, manage and monitor the work, particularly regarding routine lifting operations and the use of appropriate lifting equipment and accessories. HSE also found the principal contractor failed to properly manage and monitor the works being carried out by on its site, did not recognise insufficient detail on lifting operations and did not adequately challenge or prevent the use of untested lifting accessories on site.

DEVELOPER SHOWED "TOTAL DISREGARD" FOR SITE SAFETY ([see story here](#))

A property developer was fined after the HSE found multiple failures at a construction site in Manchester during a site inspection at a home build project. The HSE inspection found missing edge protection on first floor landings, missing and damaged security fencing, a lack of fire alarms and extinguishers, heavily obstructed walkways and inadequate welfare provision for workers.

FINE FOR TEMPORARY WORKS FAIL ([see story here](#))

A construction company was fined after a steel-fixer was seriously injured when a newly built blockwork wall collapsed. The court heard how a breeze block wall had been back-filled too early, before the mortar had properly set. The wall collapsed crushing the worker against the concrete floor of the excavation. An HSE investigation found the company had failed to properly assess a foreseeable risk associated with temporary works on site. It identified there was no temporary works design for the blockwork wall, nor for any other temporary work structures at the site. The company had failed to appoint either a temporary works coordinator or a temporary works supervisor, despite this being highlighted as a serious concern in a safety report issued eight days before the incident. Without a temporary works procedure in place, groundworkers backfilled the wall prematurely, leading directly to its collapse.

PROXIMITY TO SLOPES TOOL FOR LOADER CRANES [see story here](#)

The **Association of Lorry Loader Manufacturers & Importers** (ALLMI) has added 'Proximity to Slopes', a new calculator tool within its app, designed to assist those planning lifting operations with a lorry loader by providing guidance for the positioning of stabiliser legs when operating near a slope (taking account of mat size), so that stability is not compromised.

CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL

WAKE-UP CALL" OVER RISING INSOLVENCY RISKS IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR ([see story here](#))

New insights unveiled by **Red Flag Alert** show increasing insolvency risks that construction sector professionals must take as a 'wake-up call'. The latest data reflects an escalating trend in insolvencies, underscoring a challenging economic environment for construction firms and their partners. Particularly concerning for the construction sector, insolvency numbers have ranged from a low of 1,617 in June 2022 to a striking peak of 3,531 projected for December 2027, corroborated by the six-month moving average, which has risen sharply from 1,787 to a high of 3,212, reflecting sustained economic pressures rather than isolated instances. The data highlights a particularly sharp upward trajectory in insolvencies within the construction industry during the last 12 months of the dataset. The predicted trend indicates ongoing strain in an industry already navigating supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and regulatory complexities. RFA urges senior construction professionals, risk managers, and business leaders to take proactive steps. This data-driven alert points to a higher probability of encountering distressed or at-risk entities among prospective clients, suppliers, and contractors.

PRIVATE EQUITY GROUP TARGETS BUILDING SERVICES SECTOR ([see story here](#))

The private equity firm building up utilities contracting group **OCU** through acquisitions has started the same exercise in the building services sector. **Tendra Technical Services** has been formed by the **Triton Smaller Mid-Cap Fund II** as a platform for consolidating the UK technical services market across the built environment. Tendra initially consists of building services contractors **The James Mercer Group** and **Fletchers Engineering** plus **Coat Facilities Group**, a hard facilities management contractor. Tendra is promising to offer "integrated solutions to meet evolving customer needs, with the vision of becoming the national leader in technical services in the UK".

CIVIL ENGINEERING MARKET "CAUGHT IN NEGATIVE CYCLE" ([see story here](#))

The **Competition & Markets Authority** (CMA) has published an interim report on its civil engineering market study setting out its emerging findings and possible remedies. Broadly, it has concluded that weaknesses in the UK civil engineering market all stem from poor procurement. And there are certainly weaknesses: **Boston Consulting Group** analysis shows that of 48 UK road projects, 58% finished late, with an average overrun of 29% when delays occurred; of 27 rail projects, 56% finished late, with an average overrun of 27% when delays occurred. The CMA provisional view is that the market is caught in a negative cycle, with constrained participants subject to the wrong incentives leading to poor outcomes including costs higher than they should be, project overruns are common and investment in new approaches is lower than it could be.

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

GATEWAY 2 BACKLOG SLASHED BUT RETROFIT LOGJAM CONTINUES ([see story here](#))

The **Building Safety Regulator** has slashed the pile of legacy Gateway 2 new build cases by almost half as new approval procedures start to kick in. But large numbers of planned remediation and refurbishment projects remain stuck in a stubborn bottleneck as fresh applications continue to outpace decisions.

In other BSA news, peers have called for targeted changes to the Building Safety Regulator process after concluding widespread delays are stalling high-rise housing, blocking refurbishments, and stranding residents in unsafe buildings for longer. The House of Lords committee report urges ministers to introduce a more staged approach to Gateway 2 approvals, allowing design and build contractors to progress construction while detailed design work continues. Peers also demanded that non-safety-critical refurbishment work in high-rise buildings such as internal bathroom or kitchen upgrades be handed back to local authorities after finding BSR multidisciplinary teams tied up reviewing "low-risk, low-value" works while critical cladding and structural cases queue for months ([see here](#)).

NETWORK RAIL APPROVES FAULT NAVIGATOR ([see story here](#))

Network Rail has approved a variation to standard NR/L3/TRK/3416 supporting inspection teams being guided directly by **Machines With Vision's** Fault Navigator to suspects captured by the UTU fleet (Ultrasonic Test Units). This variation enables rail testers (URFDOs) with Fault Navigator to avoid unnecessarily walking +/-22 yards (and sometimes up to +/-110 yards) to find safety critical defects. Network Rail has approved this process change that will help find suspects faster and more accurately, taking testers to the precise location first time.

GOVERNMENT ADVANCES SINGLE CONSTRUCTION REGULATOR PLAN ([see story here](#))

The Government is pressing ahead with consultation on its plan to set up a single construction regulator as ministers push to merge building, product and competency oversight into one watchdog. The move aims to sweep away the current fragmented safety system. But the plan has already sparked industry concern after two years of procurement disruption triggered by the Building Safety Regulator's gateway regime. The House of Lords inquiry into the Building Safety Regulator warned that the present system should be allowed to bed in before sweeping plans were advanced for a single watchdog to police construction standards. The new regulator would absorb responsibilities across the built-environment chain, creating a single point of accountability for standards, enforcement and decision-making.

QUARRY FIRMS SLAM PLANNING REFORMS ([see story here](#))

The government's proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) represent a blow for minerals planning, according to the **Mineral Products Association** (MPA), which represents the quarrying sector. MPA says the revised text is a missed opportunity to address the growing threats to the domestic supply of essential minerals. The draft wording eliminates key references to long-established policy principles – maintaining a sufficient supply of minerals is no longer described as "essential" and the need for mineral planning authorities to plan for a "steady and adequate supply" of aggregates has been removed.

LANDMARK PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BILL BECOMES LAW ([see story here](#))

The Government has said the Act will remove blockages and delays in the planning system, accelerating the construction of tens of thousands of new homes across every region. In addition, it will get dozens of new roads, railway lines, windfarms, and

key critical infrastructure built quicker – all while securing a win-win for the environment and the economy. New powers in the Act will allow reservoirs to be built faster, enable a new scheme to slash energy bills for people living near pylons by up to £2,500, and support clean power projects being prioritised for grid connections to bolster Britain's energy security. The CEO of East West Railway Company has welcomed the introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Act saying it should enable the project to be delivered "more quickly" whilst providing an "important opportunity to engage with communities earlier in a more bespoke and tailored way".

MARKET NEWS/TRENDS

RAIL

[Positive measures called for as survey shows lack of confidence in rail market \(see story here\)](#)

A recent survey, on behalf of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), of 125 railway business leaders has revealed that confidence in the rail market has declined significantly over the last 12 months, and most businesses are either freezing recruitment or reducing the size of their teams. Key findings included:

- 64% say the rail market will contract in the coming year (48% last year), and only 12% believe it will grow in the next year (26% last year);
- 62% are either freezing recruitment or reducing headcount, with 34% making redundancies;
- 44% of rail suppliers believe their own businesses will grow over the next year (46% last year), with 23% saying they will contract in the next 12 months (29% last year); and
- 85% think it is likely that there will be a hiatus in rail work over the next year (83% last year). The two main measures they are likely to take in response are 'Prioritising work outside the UK' and 'Freezing/slowing recruitment'.

[MAYOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER UNVEILS NEW LONG-TERM RAIL VISION \(see story here\)](#)

On the Right Track for Growth: A 2050 Vision for the Future of Rail in Greater Manchester was unveiled by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, during a speech at the Public Transport in the North of England conference in central Manchester. Developed alongside rail industry partners, it sets out a roadmap to improve, grow and ultimately transform rail; doubling passenger numbers, supporting 75,000 new homes and unlocking £90 billion in economic uplift across the North West area of the Northern Arc by 2050.

[TFL CONSULTATION SHOWS STRONG PUBLIC BACKING FOR DLR EXTENSION \(see story here\)](#)

Transport for London's (TfL's) latest public consultation on proposals to extend the DLR from Gallions Reach to Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead, demonstrates public backing. The sought views on the proposed route, new station locations and how the extension could be delivered, with responses showing:

- 76% supported the proposed route from Gallions Reach.
- 66% backed the proposed station at Beckton Riverside.
- 77% supported the proposed station in Thamesmead town centre.

Respondents welcomed the improved connectivity and economic opportunities the extension will bring, particularly for Thamesmead. Many also suggested future extensions beyond Thamesmead to Abbey Wood or Bexley. TfL confirmed that while the current focus is on delivering the Thamesmead extension, the design allows for potential future expansion.

RAILDIRECTOR – DECEMBER EDITION

Can be found [here](#).

OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

[ENERGY GRID WORK WORTH £28BN OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS \(see story here\)](#)

The Office of Gas & Electricity Markets (Ofgem) has handed down its final determinations of the cost control period from 1st April 2026 to 31st March, known as RIIO-3, authorising £17.8bn to be spent on maintaining Britain's gas networks and £10.3bn on strengthening the electricity transmission network. The approved investment is expected to fund 80 transmission projects and associated works nationwide over the next five years.

[TEESSIDE'S CHINESE STEEL CAUSES RUMPS \(see story here\)](#)

The British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA) has escalated its campaign for fairer procurement on publicly funded infrastructure after it emerged that **Net Zero Teesside** is close to awarding a 10,000-tonne structural steelwork package to a Chinese fabricator, despite substantial UK taxpayer backing and the availability of equivalent domestic capacity. The £30m contract package would, the BCSA says, keep about 600 skilled British fabrication workers in employment for a full year. The body hears that the work now appears likely to be offshore, even though UK fabricators have the plant, labour, certification and capacity to deliver it immediately and at a time when construction demand is at its weakest since the early 1990s.

[FREE SCHOOL BUILD PLANS AXED TO FUND £3BN SEND EXPANSION \(see story here\)](#)

The government has pressed pause on a major slice of England's free school building pipeline to divert £3bn into funding 50,000 new SEND places across mainstream schools, confirming that 28 planned mainstream free schools will be scrapped, with another 16 still under review, as ministers redirect capital spending into specialist spaces designed to keep pupils with SEND learning closer to home. The move marks the biggest shift in school capital priorities in over a decade and hands councils far greater control over where SEND provision is built.

[HEATHROW TO START T4 REVAMP NEXT YEAR \(see story here\)](#)

Heathrow will unleash a £1.3bn improvement drive in 2026 as the airport kicks off a long-awaited overhaul of Terminal 4 and pushes ahead with major upgrades across its estate. Construction on the T4 revamp will begin with a new multi-storey car

park and an upgraded check in hall. The work will run in phases to keep the terminal operating normally and is expected to complete in 2031. Heathrow will also start building a dedicated baggage system for Terminal 2 capable of handling 31000 bags a day and reducing airline costs by cutting misconnected luggage.

TRENDS

NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTRUCTION READY TO REBOUND ([see story here](#))

Construction Information Services (CIS), an Irish supplier of construction industry market intelligence, estimates that construction activity in Northern Ireland will have crashed by 17% in 2025. However, it predicts that recovery will begin in 2026 with 2% growth, accelerating to 10% in 2027. This will still leave Northern Ireland construction well behind where it was in even 2024, but at least it will be growing.

PMI: STEEPEST DOWNTURN IN OUTPUT FOR FIVE-AND-A-HALF YEARS ([see story here](#))

Data from the latest monthly survey of construction purchasing managers indicates a sharp and accelerated reduction in output levels across the sector amid widespread reports of challenging market conditions. New orders also decreased to the greatest extent since May 2020. Many construction companies commented on weak client confidence, alongside delayed spending decisions linked to uncertainty ahead of the budget.

TIMBER IMPORTS NUDGE UPWARDS ([see story here](#))

New timber import figures covering the third quarter of 2025 reveal an ongoing mixed picture for the sector. Year-to-date volumes are still trailing 2024 but showing some signs of improvement as the year progresses. Latest statistics from Timber Development UK show that total imports in the first nine months of 2025 reached 7.01m cubic metres – some 2.1% below the 7.15m cu.metres recorded in the same period of 2024. This gap has narrowed since the half-year point, however, when volumes were down by 2.9%.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY PRICE FORECASTS NOT IMPACTED BY BUDGET ([see story here](#))

Construction consultant **Rider Levett Bucknall** (RLB UK) says that November's budget statement had little impact on tender price forecasts for the sector. RLB's latest Construction Market Intelligence report shows only modest revisions to its tender price forecasts from three months ago. RLB's forecast for construction inflation in the final quarter of 2025 has gone up from 3.03% to 3.17%, while the forecast for 2026 has gone down from 3.41% to 3.27%.

CONSTRUCTION OUTPUT YO-YOS AS GROWTH FALTERS AGAIN ([see story here](#))

Latest official figures from the **ONS** show total output fell 0.3% in the three months to October 2025, underlining how fragile growth remains after September's small lift. The quarter was dragged down by a 1% fall in repair and maintenance, which wiped out a barely-there 0.1% rise in new work. Four of the nine measured sectors shrank, with private housing repair and maintenance delivering the biggest hit — down 2.3% and private new housing falling 1%. October's monthly figures paint the same yo-yo picture: output dropped 0.6%, reversing September's brief 0.2% uptick. Both new work and R&M fell, by 0.7% and 0.6% respectively, reinforcing a market still struggling to find footing.

CIVIL ENGINEERS SOUND THE ALARM BELL ([see story here](#))

The latest quarterly Workload Trends Survey for 2025 Q3 released by Trade body CECA found that workloads moved to -1% on balance – the first negative reading since 2020 bringing an end to an extended period of growth. Activity remained resilient in renewable and non-renewable electricity, nuclear-related work, and water and sewerage. But the largest negative balances were recorded in railways, motorways/trunk roads, and preliminary works. Order books still showed growth overall, but at just +5% on balance, their weakest level since 2020.