October 2026

INNOVATION

BOUYGUES OPENS INNOVATION CENTRE (see story here)

Bouygues has opened a new 2,500sq m innovation centre near Paris, enabling it to test and approve new materials, equipment, construction methods and technologies under real-world conditions. The testing ground, known as Scale One, offers a range of test environments. Two zones recreate construction site environments: one for new build, another for renovations. A FabLab is dedicated to rapid prototyping for construction site accessories, and a 3D printing facility specialises in concrete. There is a training area for robotics. And an open and flexible reception area allows for co-working.

FUNDING BOOST FOR ALCHERA'S AI ROADWORKS SCHEDULING (see story here)

Alchera, which uses AI to analyse traffic data and manage road operations and maintenance works, has raised £2.7m in seed funding. Alchera aims to turn weeks of data analysis into same-day decisions for highways operators and local authorities, transforming how major infrastructure decisions get made. Local authorities, highways operators and their advisors use Alchera's software to plan roadworks, assess bus performance, understand traffic patterns and strengthen network resilience, backed by validated, real-world evidence.

CONCRETENE SECURES £4.5M FOR GRAPHENE ADMIXTURE (see story here)

University of Manchester spin-out Concretene has secured £4.5m in scale up funding for its biogas-based graphene, which can be used as an admixture for carbon negative concrete assets. The company is developing a circular manufacturing programme using local wastewater biogas from United Utilities as a feedstock for carbon-negative graphene at multiple-tonne scale in Manchester. The funding will support industrial-scale admixture manufacturing, scaled concrete trials with industrial partners and the development of the Manchester graphene programme.

TECHNOLOGY

MCS ADDS PROVIDERS TO TELEMATICS HUB (see story here)

MCS Rental Software has added 23 telematics providers to its Telematics Hub, allowing fleet owners to access data directly in the platform, using natural language for queries, bringing the number of providers for the hub to 39. The integrations aim to provide improved visibility of equipment usage, a better understanding of telematics events, and a quicker process to assist with machine warnings. The platform uses new AI integration standard MCP (model context protocol) to allow users to query the system using plain English.

MACHINES WITH VISION TARGET RAIL MAINTENANCE SECTOR FOLLOWING CONTRACT WIN (see story here)

Scottish technology company Machines With Vision plans to target the global US$78 billion rail maintenance sector after securing a multi-million, multi-year contract with Network Rail supporting their defect location efforts. Imprecise defect location data costs the industry an estimated US$6 billion a year worldwide through repeat visits and wasted crew time, as well as creating a "serious safety risk". With this in mind, it has developed innovative technology that uses cameras fitted to the underside of inspection trains to build a highly accurate image-based geospatial map of any railway network, enabling higher levels of safety, efficiency, and automation for railway infrastructure inspection and maintenance.

HEXAGON ADDS MODELLING WITH ROCSCIENCE DEAL (see story here)

Swedish geoscience company Hexagon has acquired modelling and simulation specialist Rocscience, aiming to feed ground data directly into engineering models for infrastructure and mining clients. Rocscience will become part of the radar and monitoring division within Hexagon's infrastructure and geospatial business area. The company, headquartered in Toronto, Canada, helps engineers model how rock, soil and structures behave under different conditions, analyse slope stability and ground movement, and assess how tunnels, dams and other critical infrastructure assets are likely to perform over time.

ATKINSRÉALIS AND OPTARIC PARTNER ON SMART GLASSES (see story here)

AtkinsRéalis and enterprise smart glasses company Optaric have formed a partnership to develop solutions for the nuclear sector. The partnership will establish a joint development and validation programme focused on accelerating the development, testing and validation of enterprise smart glasses designed for use in nuclear and other safety-critical environments. The programme aims to demonstrate how these technologies can be deployed safely and effectively across the nuclear lifecycle. Initial development activity will focus on three priority use cases: Remote Expert Support, Records Capture and Digital Work Packs. These applications are intended to help frontline workers access trusted information, connect with specialists and capture digital records at the point of work, supporting safer and more efficient delivery.

WALES AND BORDERS USE COMMUNICATION MASTS FOR WEATHER MONITORING (see story here)

Network Rail says its Wales and Borders route has become the first in the organisation to install local weather stations on existing GSM-R railway communication masts to provide more accurate, real-time information, helping teams respond to severe weather. Ten stations have been installed across Wales and Borders in total, measuring rainfall, wind speed and direction, temperature, humidity and atmospheric pressure directly from locations on the railway. The technology, developed by Ninehundred Communications Group, has been installed following lessons learned from previous severe weather events that caused disruption and cost.

DRONE TECHNOLOGY STRENGTHENS EAST COAST'S SEVERE WEATHER RESPONSE (see story here)

Network Rail says it is exploring the role drones could play in managing flooding, storms and other weather-related incidents on the East Coast Main Line, with flight exercises near Doncaster demonstrating how aerial imagery can give engineers an early view of railway infrastructure and help identify areas requiring closer inspection. The exercises form part of Network Rail East Coast's evaluation of the technology and its potential uses in extreme weather conditions that

make accessing the railway difficult, allowing teams to gather initial information remotely. Network Rail said that by helping teams understand the condition of the railway sooner, drones had the potential to support a faster and safer response to disruption.

NEW DIGITAL TOOL HELPS ENGINEERS STREAMLINE VEGETATION INSPECTION (see story here)

Engineers have used Digitised Lineside Inspection (DLI) to complete a three-year vegetation inspection cycle in just two months. Network Rail added that the technology was transforming how Scotland's railway was inspected, making the process safer, faster and more efficient.Teams in Edinburgh have used the technology to carry out inspections across their patch, including sections of the East Coast Main Line, a vital link between Edinburgh and London King's Cross. DLI uses footage captured from trains to give engineers a clear view of vegetation along the railway, allowing them to spot potential problems and plan any work needed from the safety of the depot. By doing this, engineers spend less time walking the railway, where special access is needed to work safely. It means fewer unnecessary trips trackside and less exposure to the risks that come with working on the railway.

EQUIPMENT

DEVELON ADDS 32T EXCAVATOR TO SERIES 9 RANGE (see story here)

Develon has added a fifth model to its Series 9 range, the 32t DX300LC-9, with a fully electro-hydraulic control system and smart safety systems. The DX300LC-9 is powered by the Develon DX08 engine providing a net output of 207kW at 1800 rpm and a maximum torque of 1230 kgf/m at 1300 rpm. The DX300LC-9 has a maximum digging depth of 7305 mm and a maximum digging reach of 10,530 mm. There is also a super long reach version of the excavator, the DX300SLR-9, which offers a longer reach, one metre longer than the previous DX300SLR-7 model.

MCFADDEN BUYS NEW TRACTO GRUNDODRILL (see story here)

McFadden (Civils) in Northern Ireland has bought one of Tracto's new horizontal direct drilling (HDD) machines, a Grundodrill 20ACS. The company uses trenchless technology for utilities projects, working for companies including Northern Ireland Water, Irish Water and Scottish Water. The new rig combines rock and jet drilling capabilities in a single, highly automated platform designed to tackle complex ground conditions with greater efficiency, safety and productivity.

NIXON TO SUPPLY INFINITY CUBE BATTERIES (see story here)

Nixon Hire has invested more than £1m to supply Infinity Cube Europe's Pro range of large battery storage units (BSUs), with capacities up to 550kW. The Infinity Cube S Pro, M Pro and L Pro offer 200kW, 300kW and 550kW of energy storage respectively. Units can be linked to create larger battery systems as a site's needs grow, while each can coordinate up to three generators, rotating their use to help align maintenance visits.

HITACHI & AKKODIS PARTNER ON SMART ATTACHMENTS (see story here)

Hitachi Construction Machinery Europe and Akkodis, part of the Adecco group, have former a partnership to develop and deliver advanced integrated solutions through the manufacturer's European Customisation Centre. The move comes as Hitachi adopts new branding as Landcros. It aims to expand Landcros Europe's capability to design and deliver advanced smart attachments, ICT, and other technology tailored to the diverse needs of customers across Europe, and to do it faster.

CAT LAUNCHES MINI AND MICRO EXCAVATORS (see story here)

Caterpillar has launched three new small excavators, the micro Cat 301 Compact Radius, and the Cat 302.4 and 302.6 mini excavators. The Cat 301 CR targets the most confined spaces, fitting through 762mm x 1,981mm doorways while its compact radius design minimizes machine overhang to work in tight spaces. Its expandable undercarriage delivers improved stability and increases lift capacity compared to its predecessor, the Cat 300.9D. To enhance stability, the 301 CR is 26% wider than the 300.9D, with a fully expanded undercarriage, with increased lift capacity. The Cat 302.4 and Cat 302.6 bring more options in the 2.4 and 2.6USt classes.

SOUTHERN TO LOOK FOR LEAKS WITH FIBRE OPTICS (see story here)

Southern Water is to trial in Hampshire a system from Lightsonics that uses Openreach's fibre optic cable network to detect leaks, analysing changes in light travelling through fibreoptic cables that points to vibrations caused by leaking pipes located nearby. Machine-learning helps distinguish these signals from traffic, roadworks and other background noise, and estimates the location where the water is escaping. The resulting data allows engineers to investigate and repair leaks more quickly

B&T ORDERS ELECTRIC SANY KIT (see story here)

B&T Plant Hire has ordered eight quiet and zero emission electric excavators and telehandlers from Sany, aiming at jobs on urban sites where noise and emissions are restricted. The order comprises three SY19E electric mini excavators, one SY35E electric excavator and four STH625E electric telehandlers.

TAKEUCHI BRINGS OFFSET EXCAVATOR TO UK (see story here)

Takeuchi's latest 15t compact excavator is now available in the UK, with an offset boom. The TB3150, the latest model in Takeuchi's 3-Series offers 14% more hydraulic horsepower than its predecessor. Powered by a new 85kW Yanmar engine, it aims to deliver the performance required across a wide range of demanding applications. The offset boom system allows operators to dig offset without repositioning the machine, making it well suited for utility work and applications that require precise positioning. With less track repositioning the TB3150 is ideal in tight spaces and applications that need 15-tonne power in restricted areas.

CASE EXPANDS COMPACT RANGE (see story here)

Case has launched a new backhoe loader and electric mini track loader, and made upgrades to its compact wheel loader range. Developed as a straightforward, productive and cost effective machine, the 550SV is designed for construction, municipal and rental applications, powered by a 2.8-litre four-cylinder diesel engine producing 74hp (55kW). The EU Stage V engine uses a Diesel Oxidation Catalyst (DOC) and Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) after-treatment system, without the need for Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) or AdBlue, simplifying maintenance.

QUATTRO PLANT UPGRADES KOMATSU DOZERS (see story here)

Quattro Plant has completed a major upgrade programme on two Komatsu D41 dozers, bringing the machines into compliance with NRMM emissions standards through the installation of an AdBlue-powered SCR system. The project is believed to be a first for UK rail, building on Quattro Plant's growing expertise in emissions upgrades for construction and rail equipment. The new exhaust and SCR system effectively takes the machines from their original non-compliant Stage 2 specification to Stage 5 compliance, significantly reducing emissions and extending their working life.

WERNICK ADDS PORTAL FRAME BUILDINGS (see story here)

Modular building and portable cabin supplier Wernick has added steel portal frame buildings to its range, for hire and purchase through a new division, Wernick Portal Frames, supplied for a wide range of applications, including warehouses, workshops, manufacturing facilities, logistics depots, aircraft hangars, commercial storage and leisure facilities, bringing new ways for customers to add operational space. Portal frame buildings can also be paired with Wernick's modular buildings and portable cabins, allowing different building requirements across a site to be brought together as part of a coordinated solution.

CW PLANT HIRE INVESTS IN INSTAGRID BATTERIES (see story here)

Charles Wilson (CW) Plant has invested in over 40 Instagrid battery power units, through Seddon Plant and Engineer, aiming to help customers cut costs and meet sustainability targets. The battery packs can save up to 85% when compared with comparable sized combustion generators, through minimal maintenance, and low re-charging costs. Instagrid data demonstrates a typical recharge of 2.1 kWh portable power units costing on average 50p at current prices from a mains power supply, providing long term efficiency and value.

MARSDEN ADDS THREE-AXLE LIEBHERR 55-TONNER (see story here)

Marsden Crane Services has taken delivery of a Liebherr LTM 1055-3.3, the second of the three-axle all terrain cranes in the UK. It features a 40m main boom that can be topped by a 15m double swingaway fly jib, achieving a lifting height of up to 54m and a working radius of 46m. Alternatively, the fly jib can be swapped for a 1.9m assembly jib, which can be angled up to 50°, targetting assembly work in confined environments.

The 55t crane incorporates a range of Liebherr's latest technological innovations, including the newest generation of the Liccon 3 control system and advanced driver assistance systems, which continuously scan the surroundings and provide warnings to the driver, aiming to enhance safety whilst travelling on roads.

MATERIALS/USES/METHODS

ELITE PRECAST LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE WITH RESOURCES FOR RAIL PROJECTS (see story here)

Elite Precast Concrete has launched a new website to help rail contractors, designers and buyers explore precast products and access technical information, bringing together product details, applications, case studies and resources in one place. Visitors working on rail projects can explore solutions including Legato® interlocking concrete blocks, Retainer-Rock® retaining walls, cable protection covers, utility protection slabs and safety barriers. The website's Elite Knowledge section provides access to ISO information, BSI certificates, installation guides and CPD-style presentations.

CHRYSO & ECOCEM LAUNCH LOW CARBON CEMENT AND ADMIXTURE (see story here)

Saint-Gobain's Chryso and Ecocem have launched a new low carbon cement and admixture solution, already being used in the UK at John Lewis's former HQ. Ecocem's ACT technology reduces clinker content to lower carbon emissions. However, to ensure the optimal durability of concretes produced, admixture solutions must be adapted accordingly. Chyrso developed a new superplasticizer, EnviroMix 3150 ACT, which, when combined with Ecocem ACT cement, allows concrete mix-designs to reach a reduction in carbon footprint over 50%, corresponding to GWR5 classification and beyond. This highly durable concrete solution offers high flowability and low viscosity, even at low water-to-cement ratios. It is robust against variations in water content and delivers workability retention of over 90 minutes, which can be further extended without segregation.

HOLCIM UK OPENS SUNDERLAND RAIL ROUTE TO SAFEGUARD NE ASPHALT SUPPLY (see story here)

Holcim UK has launched a new rail freight route into the Port of Sunderland, which is set to move around 100,000 tonnes of aggregate in its first year, strengthening asphalt supply across the North East and easing pressure on established logistics routes in a challenging regional market. The project was developed after Holcim UK identified an opportunity to use Sunderland's existing railhead as an alternative route for bringing aggregate into the region. The material will be used in asphalt production, primarily supporting Northumbrian Roads and also supplying Hulands Asphalt, helping serve the wider North East market.

BREEDON GROUP BRINGS ASPHALT PRODUCTION BACK TO NORTHUMBERLAND (see story here)

Breedon Group has invested £4m into a new asphalt plant in Northumberland, bringing production of the material back to the site for the first time in more than a decade, replacing a previous plant that had been decommissioned. Now fully operational, it will produce circa 50,000 tonnes of asphalt a year, including a full suite of asphalt materials, including Breedon Performance Asphalt. The new facility runs on LPG for a cleaner fuel burn and reduced carbon output, as well as

being WMA and RAP-enabled, allowing Recycled Asphalt Planings (RAP) recovered from existing roads to be incorporated into new asphalt mixes.

HILLHOUSE OPENS EDINBURGH ASPHALT FACILITY (see story here)

Hillhouse Quarry Group has opened a new £5m asphalt production facility near Edinburgh, bringing Hillhouse's established asphalt production capability to the east of Scotland for the first time, marking the completion of a significant investment in construction materials infrastructure and expands the range of materials available from its established Soutra Mains operation. The new facility provides customers across Edinburgh, the Lothians, Scottish Borders and the wider east of Scotland with a locally produced supply of asphalt, reducing lead times and providing greater flexibility for infrastructure and development projects.

HEIDELBERG EXPANDS MANCHESTER RECYCLING (see story here)

Heidelberg Materials UK has expanded the capabilities of its Agecroft recycling operation in Swinton, Manchester, investing in a new wash plant and rail link. Agecroft recycles construction, demolition and excavation waste at scale and aims to supply customers with a full range of high-quality primary and recycled aggregates for use in construction projects. The site now boasts the UK's largest wash plant, the second Heidelberg has invested in following the installation of the same type at its Bristol-based B&A Group site in 2025.

EUROVIA TO RECYCLE ROADS FOR ASPHALT (see story here)

Eurovia has opened a new plant in Thurrock, Green Aggregates, that will recycle materials from the highway to create high quality aggregates for aphalt. The plant, claimed as a UK first, will significantly reduce the need for virgin materials, using advanced reprocessing systems to deliver consistent sustainable high-quality aggregates for asphalt production, reducing reliance on quarried materials and improving the circular economy. It will use selected materials taken during the initial milling process when resurfacing a highway, recycled to deliver the same performance as virgin materials, using processes developed within Eurovia,

CARBON STORING ASPHALT USED IN CUMBRIA (see story here)

Heidelberg Materials UK has used its CarbonLock biogenic asphalt, and an Ammann electric paver, to improve a stretch of the A689 for Westmorland and Furness Council to reduce the carbon footprint of the project. CarbonLock contains biogenic material within the binder that absorbs and stores CO_2 from the atmosphere during its life. This CO_2 is permanently 'locked' into the asphalt, even when it is recycled.

SUSTAINABILITY

DIESEL-FREE PLANT FLEET GROWS ON LOWER THAMES CROSSING (see story here)

More than 30 zero-emission machines are now working on the £10bn Lower Thames Crossing project for National Highways with the diesel-free fleet set to hit 150 by peak construction in 2028. Work on the new road and tunnel under the River Thames began in early 2026, and is being carried out only using electric, HVO and hydrogen powered equipment and machinery. Machines currently at work include 20 tonne excavators, rollers, tractors, telehandlers and hydrogen generators. No diesel has been permitted on Lower Thames Crossing construction sites since 2025 – another first for a major British infrastructure project.

TRAVIS PERKINS LAUNCHES SCOPE 3 CALCULATOR (see story here)

Travis Perkins has launched a carbon calculator, Connect, which will allow customers to track Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions, which have traditionally been hard to track. Travis Perkins has now mapped material weights in tonnes and kilograms, and applied a precise CO2e figure to more than 120,000 products, using manufacturer's EPD data where it exists and drawing from recognised industry datasets elsewhere, simplifying the reporting process, automatically transforming complex, fragmented data into clean, auditable and report-ready Scope 3 information.

TRU PURCHASES BIODIVERSITY UNITS FROM LEEDS CITY COUNCIL (see story here)

Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) has completed the purchase of 26 biodiversity units from Leeds City Council to support enhancements at two woodland sites, Barnbow Woods and Barnbow Hall Woods. The project will deliver 8.32 hectares of long-term woodland habitat enhancement – equivalent to 11 football pitches, supporting the programme's commitment to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). TRU's target of 10% is a core part of its sustainability strategy, with the aim of leaving the natural environment along the route in a measurably better state than before construction began. The programme's approach to delivering this will also set a new standard for future Network Rail projects nationwide.

NEW STUDY TO EXAMINE INTERCONNECTED CLIMATE RISKS TO SCOTLAND'S INFRASTRUCTURE (see story here)

A pioneering study will investigate how climate change could create disruption across Scotland's critical infrastructure, helping organisations better understand risks to the services people depend on every day. The research is being commissioned by the Climate Ready Infrastructure Scotland Forum (CRIS), a partnership of infrastructure operators, government bodies and academic institutions working to strengthen Scotland's resilience to climate change. It will examine how problems affecting one infrastructure network can trigger much wider impacts elsewhere, assessing how climate-related disruption could spread across industries including transport, energy, water supply and communication, whilst helping identify vulnerabilities that might otherwise be missed when risks to sectors are considered separately.

LIVE LABS 2 SHARES LOW CARBON ROAD IDEAS (see story here)

ADEPT has launched the 'Little Book of Live Labs 2', sharing proven carbon cutting innovations from the £30m DfT programme of pilots that can be adopted by local highway authorities. The guide is available for free online here, and shows local authorities how to save money, time and carbon using approaches that have already been tested on real roads.

TRAINING, RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYMENT

NEW RIGHT-TO-WORK RULES AND SAFETY LEVY HIT CONSTRUCTION (see story here)

Sweeping new right-to-work rules will force construction firms to check self-employed workers as part of a fresh crackdown on illegal migrant labour and rogue employers. Contractors hiring individual workers must now confirm they are legally entitled to work in the UK, bringing self-employed and non-standard labour much closer to the checks already required for employees. Until now, statutory right-to-work checks have largely applied to people classed as employees. New extended liability provisions mean main contractors could potentially face penalties where illegal workers are found lower down a contracting chain and the required contractual safeguards have not been put in place.

SOLOMONS OFFERS WISDOM AT LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRE (see story here)

Quantity surveyors Solomons Europe has launched an immersive learning centre, aiming to offer leadership training in a retreat environment for individuals and teams. The centre, dubbed The Halcyon Club, has been built on a 26 acre site in Penrith, Cumbria. Professionals from organisations including Balfour Beatty, BAM Nuttall, Morgan Sindall, Stantec, Altrad and Siemens have already participated in programmes.

PLANT AND CIVILS ASSOCIATIONS TEAM UP IN SCOTLAND (see story here)

The Scottish Plant Owners Association (SPOA) and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association Scotland (CECA Scotland) have formed a new partnership aiming to tackle skills shortages in the sector. The organisations will combine networks, knowledge and resources to address shared industry challenges, with a focus on skills, recruitment and creating clearer career pathways into plant, construction and civil engineering. They also expect opportunities to join forces to lobby on issues that affect the wider construction industry.

BALFOUR TARGETS 6,000 SUPPLY CHAIN WORKFORCE FOR POWER BOOM (see story here)

Balfour Beatty is gearing up to nearly double its power project workforce to 6,000 by 2030 as Britain's grid spending boom gathers pace, four times the number deployed in 2024. The expansion push comes as network owners prepare to pump around £80bn into transmission infrastructure by 2031, fuelling the biggest expansion of Britain's grid in more than 70 years. The contractor is positioning itself to take a major share of the work, backed by long-term frameworks, specialist crews and its own steel tower manufacturing business.

TAYLOR WIMPEY CUTS WAGES OF 'OVERPAID' WORKERS (see story here)

A pay row has broken out in the North East where Taylor Wimpey joiners and scaffolders were earning more than national average rates. The house builder discovered the discrepancy as part of its regular pay audits for directly employed workers, with around 50 joiners and scaffolders found to be earning nearly 25% more than comparable roles mainly made up of higher bonuses. The workers have been asked to sign new contracts on reduced terms which have come under fire from the Unite union.

HEATHROW PITCHES 17,500 BUILDING JOBS AS RUNWAY DOUBTS GROW (see story here)

Heathrow Airport has dangled the prospect of at least 17,500 local construction jobs as it steps up the push for a third runway. The airport is gearing up to train the workforce needed for the huge expansion programme, with opportunities spanning engineering, logistics, electrical installation, carpentry and joinery. It has convened the first meeting of its Heathrow Infrastructure Skills Council, bringing unions, colleges and training providers together to prepare workers for the build. The jobs push comes amid fresh uncertainty over political backing for expansion. Heathrow forecasts at least 17,500 local jobs at peak construction, alongside 33,000 jobs across its nine neighbouring boroughs by 2055. The airport has pledged 5,000 youth apprenticeships, traineeships and other routes into work, and will play a key role in the new West London Construction Training Excellence Centre, with an expanded SME Academy helping smaller firms compete for supply chain work generated.

FIRST AI APPRENTICES JOIN BRITAIN'S RAILWAY (see story here)

The first cohort of Artificial Intelligence Engineering Apprentices has joined Britain's railway. Based in York and London, the new apprentices will combine specialist learning with hands-on experience, building the skills needed to support the safe and responsible adoption of AI across the rail industry. This long-term, industry-wide scheme comes six months after GBRX (the strategic technology and innovation body for Great British Railways) presented its 'Artificial Intelligence in Rail: The Industry Action Plan' which identified capability as a key constraint for AI adoption. The placements will be distributed throughout the railway industry and coordinated through the AI Incubator Accelerator (AIIA), building skills within individual organisations while strengthening capability across the sector.

GOVERNMENT TO SET 3% APPRENTICE TARGET FOR MAJOR PUBLIC JOBS (see story here)

Contractors on large government construction and infrastructure projects will face an apprenticeship target of at least 3% under plans to use public spending to back British industry. The government will also tighten the definition of a UK supplier in a move aimed at firms with little more than a British postal address. A new definition will be published by January 2027, helping departments track UK suppliers and subcontractors across public supply chains, followed by a new National Procurement Policy Statement in March 2027, which will prioritise high-quality jobs, fair pay and skills opportunities, including routes into work for young people. New guidance on social value in central government procurement has also been published. Firms bidding for major government contracts will be judged on commitments to create high-quality jobs, tackle local skills shortages and support young people into employment.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

NETWORK RAIL CELEBRATES WOMEN IN ENGINEERING FOR ADA LOVELACE DAY (see story here)

To mark Ada Lovelace Day, Network Rail celebrated two female engineers who work across its network, shining a spotlight on Emma Russell, an Asset Engineer in Scotland's buildings team, and Inge-Sarah Andersen, a Senior Asset Engineer and STEM ambassador. Network Rail said that despite progress, women remained underrepresented in engineering. According to figures from EngineeringUK, women make up 16.9% of the engineering workforce. The infrastructure manager added that it employed thousands of engineers across its infrastructure, signalling, construction and maintenance teams, and had been working to increase the proportion of women in engineering roles through targeted recruitment campaigns, mentoring programmes, apprenticeships, and partnerships with schools to inspire the next generation of female engineers.

PUBLIC GIVEN CHANCE TO SHAPE TRU RAIL UPGRADES (see story here)

Communities in and around Huddersfield are being given a further opportunity to have their say on the next phase of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), as updated plans are unveiled for significant improvements between Standedge and Gledholt, as part of the multi-billion-pound programme to modernise the railway between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York, delivering faster, more frequent and greener trains on a better, cleaner and more reliable railway. People are now being encouraged to view the updated plans and provide feedback as part of this further consultation period, running from 3rd November until 2nd December 2026.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LOCAL NEEDS AND SOCIAL VALUE DELIVERY (see here)

Pagabo has launched ImpactOS, an Operating System for Social Value. It brings together every stage of the social value lifecycle, from planning and procurement through to delivery, measurement, evidence and reporting, in one connected platform, providing the visibility, intelligence and confidence organisations need to make better decisions and create greater impact. It incorporates full lifecycle tracking and local needs focus, providing flexible, tailored metrics along with speed and simplicity.

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ADDS SUICIDE PREVENTION TO DESIGN STANDARDS (see story here)

National Highways led the development of the Suicide Prevention Assessment and Review (SPAR) standard in partnership with the UK Roads Leadership Group (UKRLG), thought to be the first of its kind in Europe. It aims to embed suicide prevention into the planning, design and delivery of road infrastructure across the UK. The standard builds on guidance published by National Highways and UKRLG on World Suicide Prevention Day last year. While the guidance encouraged consideration of suicide prevention, the SPAR standard makes it a required part of the development of relevant road projects. Project teams must assess suicide-related risks and consider opportunities to reduce them through the planning and design of road schemes and bridges. The standard also requires ongoing review to ensure risks are continually monitored and suitable interventions remain in place as projects progress.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

QTS GROUP'S FIRST SAFETY JAMBOREE (see story here)

National rail contractor QTS Group has hosted its first safety-focused Jamboree in Greater Manchester. The two-day event at Ashworth Valley Scout Camp in Rochdale brought together more than 350 colleagues, supply chain partners and activity hosts. The event was built around interactive demonstrations and hands-on activities. Attendees could see new technology and best practice from suppliers and specialists, build relationships across the supply chain, and find out more about the services available to the rail industry.

ELECTRICAL WHOLESALER FINED AFTER WORKER CRUSHED (see story here)

A Telford-based electrical wholesaler and manufacturer has been fined after an employee sustained life-changing injuries when he was crushed during loading operations using a forklift truck. The man was working for City Electrical Factors Limited at its Proteus Switchgear Industrial Division acting as a "spotter" while a forklift truck loaded heavy switchboard equipment onto a flatbed lorry. The load, which weighed 231kg, was not secured to the forklift and fell on top of him, causing brain and spine injuries as a result of which he now lives in a care home and requires 24/7 care.

An HSE investigation found the company failed to ensure the lifting operation was properly planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner. There was no risk assessment or lift plan, and employees had not been provided with information or instructions about the lifting operation, despite this being a regular activity. It also found that the load could have been secured to the forklift truck using pre-existing anchor points. The load also had lifting eyes welded to it, which meant that the crane attached to the delivery lorry could have been used as a safer alternative to the forklift truck. Instead, employees were appointed as "spotters" and were expected to steady the loads whilst they were being moved and lifted which was an unsafe and unnecessary system of work.

CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL

MARSH LAUNCHES ROADS, PLANT INSURANCE (see story here)

Marsh has launched two new insurance facilities, covering road contractors and plant. The Strada road construction facility provides project-specific insurance for UK road contractors covering construction all risks (CAR) and third-party liability (TPL). Strada's exclusive clauses are developed specifically for road and highway risks, Marsh says, including provisions that address common insurance challenges such as extensions, open-to-traffic phases, and phased completions. Underwritten by a panel of global (re)insurers, Strada offers confirmed limits up to £1bn for CAR and up to £1m for TPL risks. I

SECTOR NEWS

RAIL

RIA PUBLISHES CHECKLIST TO TEST COHERENCE OF UK RAIL STRATEGIES (see story here)

The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has published *A Checklist for Rail Strategies,* a practical framework designed to help Government, Great British Railways (GBR), devolved authorities and industry test whether the UK's growing family of rail, transport and place strategies work together as a coherent, deliverable system. RIA said its checklist did not make policy judgements or evaluate existing strategies, but rather "helped those commissioning, producing, assuring or updating strategies test whether the right questions have been asked, whether assumptions and priorities are aligned, and whether the proposed direction is credible and deliverable over time."

PUBLIC BACKS PLANS FOR DLR THAMESMEAD AND BECKTON RIVERSIDE EXTENSION (see story here)

More than 550 people and organisations have shared their views on plans to extend the DLR to Thamesmead and Beckton Riverside, with consultation responses showing continued strong support for the scheme. Respondents highlighted improved public transport links, regeneration opportunities and better access to jobs, education and services that the extension could provide for communities. The proposed extension would provide Thamesmead with its first rail connection and support the delivery of thousands of new homes and jobs in Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead, helping unlock some of London's most important regeneration opportunities while improving connectivity across east and southeast London.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPENS ON ABERDARE TO HIRWAUN METRO EXTENSION (see story here)

Transport for Wales (TfW) in partnership with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, has launched public engagement on proposals to extend passenger rail services from Aberdare to Hirwaun. The scheme forms part of the future expansion phases of the South Wales Metro, as outlined in TfW's vision for rail across Wales and Borders – Today, Tomorrow, Together.

GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS HQ AND APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME CONFIRMED (see story here)

The site of Great British Railways' (GBR) headquarters has been unveiled in Derby, with up to 600 young residents also set to benefit from new apprenticeship places opening over the next four years. The Department for Transport (DfT) said work on the brand-new development at Becketwell, a brownfield site in Derby city centre, was expected to begin in early 2027, reaching completion by spring 2029. It added that GBR's new HQ would bring hundreds of rail jobs to the city and boost the region's economy by an estimated £151 million, supporting the Government's mission to "drive growth in every postcode."

WELSH GOVERNMENT TAKES ACTION TO CLIMATE-PROOF TRANSPORT NETWORK (see story here)

The Welsh Government says it is working with partners to "build a transport network that can withstand future climate pressures and best serve the people of Wales.". It is working with Network Rail to strengthen its maintenance and inspection regimes, improving the reliability of train cooling systems, and introducing enhanced weather monitoring so disruption can be reduced before it affects passengers. It added that future transport policies aimed to deliver networks that were both resilient and low-carbon, investing in infrastructure that could withstand future climate pressures while supporting the transition to net zero.

EAST WEST RAIL ALLIANCE LINED UP FOR £650M EXTENSION (see story here)

Network Rail is lining up £650m of extra work for its East West Rail alliance to boost capacity and help handle demand from the planned Universal theme park near Bedford. Laing O'Rourke, VolkerRail and AtkinsRéalis are set to land the design and construction package without a fresh competition, extending their existing Marston Vale Line works. The proposed deal covers upgrades between Bletchley and Stewartby, the Oxford Parkway to Bletchley route and work at Milton Keynes Central station. Major elements include double tracking between Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, a new track layout at Stewartby, passing loops, electrification and re-signalling.

NEW BRADFORD STATION UNLOCKS BETTER CONNECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES (see story here)

Passengers across Yorkshire are set to benefit from major station improvements, as the Government has confirmed a new station at Bradford Interchange. Bradford's connections with some of the North's largest cities including Leeds, Manchester and York will be transformed as passengers will be able to benefit from more frequent trains, improved journey times and reliability. The project unlocks the potential to regenerate Bradford's Southern Gateway, and in tandem with the proposed West Yorkshire Mass Transit, would support thousands of new homes, jobs, and up to £1 billion in economic benefits.

OCTOBER ISSUE OF RAIL DIRECTOR AVAILABLE HERE.

Focusing this month on freight.

LEEDS STATION SET FOR TRANSFORMATION WITH £303 MILLION UPGRADE (see story here)

The Government has announced a further £200 million to transform one of the North's busiest transport hubs, Leeds station. The additional funding was announced during the Autumn Budget, with upgrades set to be delivered by 2030, to include the construction of a new central overbridge, three new entrances, more space on the concourses and a longer Platform 14. It added that passengers would benefit from more direct routes through the station and less crowding thanks to nearly 40 per cent more ticket barriers and boosted lift capacity to make journeys quicker and easier.

HIGHWAYS

ROADS AXE HITS 24 PROJECTS ACROSS ENGLAND (see story here)

Two dozen road projects across England have been dropped from the government's funding programme. The cuts tear into the future civils pipeline, with four of the biggest schemes alone carrying a combined price tag of more than £1.6bn. The Department for Transport has not publicly published the official list but has started to write to each impacted council

informing them of the cancellations. They include the £930m M5 Junction 9 and A46 upgrade in Gloucestershire, £303m Melksham bypass, £197m Chesterfield Staveley Regeneration Route and £185.3m Kendal Northern Access Route.

ENGLAND'S ROAD REPAIR SPENDING POWERS UP TO £4.9BN (see story here)

Councils are stepping up preventative roadworks as ministers push to break the cycle of repeatedly patching potholes. New Government figures show 94% of councils will carry out preventative maintenance this year, up from 76% last year, boosting demand for treatments that stop road surfaces breaking up. The shift comes as council road maintenance spending reaches a record £4.9bn, up £800m in two years. Nearly 7,000 miles of roads are due to be resurfaced this year, more than 10% up on last year. Ministers have also released £220m of incentive funding to councils across England after they met performance targets. Further cash will follow later this year only if authorities hit their targets.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE SETS OUT £1.45BN TRANSPORT INVESTMENT PLAN (see story here)

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) is preparing to submit its £1.45 billion Transport for City Regions (TCR) programme to Government. Developed in partnership with the region's four local authorities, the programme will support the move to bus franchising, continue the renewal of Supertram fleet and infrastructure, fund major rail projects including Rotherham Gateway and Waverley stations, improve transport links supporting the reopening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport, and deliver more than £141 million of investment in local neighbourhoods across South Yorkshire.

DATA CENTRES

PLANS LODGED FOR £200M DATA CENTRE TO REPLACE MICROSOFT HQ IN READING (see story here)

Plans have been submitted to build a £200m data centre on the site of Microsoft's former UK headquarters at near Reading. Proposals from property owner Mapeley, which acquired the site in 2005, would see three office buildings demolished to make way for the 72MW centre, which could reach up to 100ft high. Developers have proposed using natural gas-powered fuel cells to generate the required 110MW of power for the data centre while grid capacity is expanded, with the National Grid currently supplying just 1.8MW to the site.

OTHER

PLANS GO IN FOR £1BN NORTHAMPTON CITY CENTRE OVERHAUL (see story here)

A £1bn regeneration of Northampton's long-derelict Greyfriars site has taken a major step forward after plans were formally submitted to West Northamptonshire Council. Developer ECF is seeking permission for up to 1,220 homes alongside more than 100,000 sq ft of retail, leisure, commercial and community space across the town centre site.

PEAKY BLINDERS CREATOR TO DELIVER BIRMINGHAM MEDIA VILLAGE (see story here)

Homes England has selected Digbeth Loc Studios as its preferred development partner to deliver a new £35m creative and mixed-use neighbourhood at Fazeley Street in the heart of Digbeth, Birmingham. Peaky Blinders creator Steven Knight is a director of Digbeth Loc Studios which oversaw construction of the Birmingham film studio of the same name.

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT UNVEILS "UNPRECEDENTED" £2BN MASTERPLAN (see story here)

Birmingham Airport has unveiled a £2bn draft masterplan with the potential to take the transport hub to about 30 million passengers and create more than 50,000 jobs in the region. Over the next 15 years, the draft masterplan identifies how the airport can make best use of its existing runway capacity, alongside significantly enhanced passenger facilities and improving surface access. The first phase could start next year, with significant capital investments made in areas including baggage facilities, reconfiguration and additional aircraft stands, improvements into surface access and terminal facilities. The proposals could generate an additional £3.6bn GVA for the West Midlands, creating more than 50,000 jobs, with 3,800 on site at the airport.

£24 MILLION N-E TOWN CENTRES BOOST AS WIDER TRANSPORT VISION SUBMITTED (see story here)

A new fund to ensure connectivity is at the heart of major town centre projects has been backed by leaders as part of a wider package of transport measures. The Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority Cabinet members have agreed proposals should be sent to Government on a wide-ranging transport and infrastructure vision of more than £1.3bn. The package will include a sum of approximately £24million for each of the region's five local authorities: Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees – to support connections and transport for major regeneration projects taking place in each borough.

GREEN LIGHT FOR £600M WESTMINSTER OFFICE SCHEME (see story here)

Investment manager Meadow Partners has secured planning approval for the £600m redevelopment of 10–20 Victoria Street in Westminster. Plans will transform two existing buildings into a 12-storey Grade A office development providing 24,000 sq. m of workspace and 754 sq. m of new retail and restaurant space designed by Piercy & Company.

WATES CALLS FOR £100M BUNDLES IN NHS HEALTH CENTRES BUILD PLAN (see story here)

Wates has called for the Government's planned building programme of NHS neighbourhood health centres to be bundled into £100m-plus regional packages to pull in private cash and get builders on site faster. The contractor warns a patchwork of standalone jobs risks bogging down delivery with repeated tender exercises, higher costs and lengthy approvals.

ELECTRICITY NETWORK INVESTMENT COULD SUPPORT 23K JOBS ACROSS EAST MIDS (see story here)

Investment in Britain's electricity networks could support 23,300 jobs across the East Midlands by 2035 and add £4.6bn to the region's economy, according to the latest figures. The Electricity Networks Sector Growth Plan, published by BEAMA and the Energy Networks Association (ENA), said the East Midlands has the highest jobs figure of any area in England. The roles could span manufacturing, construction and installation, and running and maintaining the network.

PLANS LODGED FOR WELSH WATER'S BIGGEST-EVER PROJECT (see story here)

Plans have gone in for Welsh Water's £600m overhaul of water treatment infrastructure serving more than 400,000 properties across south Wales. The Cwm Taf scheme is the biggest infrastructure project in the company's history and will replace ageing treatment assets that have served the region for more than a century. Contractors and investors are already being sounded out ahead of procurement starting in early 2027 under Ofwat's Direct Procurement for Customers model.

WATCHDOG MPS DEMAND TIGHTER COST CONTROLS ON SIZEWELL C (see story here)

Watchdog MPs have demanded tighter oversight of Sizewell C construction warning that taxpayers and consumers are carrying most of the financial risk. The Public Accounts Committee branded plans for annual progress reports to Parliament "totally inadequate" for the nuclear project. It wants six-monthly updates setting out actual and forecast costs, changes to the construction timetable and progress against key milestones.

TRENDS

TIER 1 TENDER RISES COOL BUT SPECIALIST TRADES COSTS HOLD FIRM (see story here)

Cost consultant Gardiner + Theobald has trimmed its 2026 tender price inflation forecast to 3.25% from 3.5% in its Autumn Market Update. London's forecast falls to 3.5% from 3.75%, with the South East, South West and East Anglia also seeing quarter-point cuts. Forecasts for the remaining regions are unchanged. G&T said the market was becoming "more selective, not cheaper", with improving main contractor appetite masking a squeeze on specialist capacity. Tier 1 firms are engaging more actively on selected 2027 opportunities as workloads soften. But competing bidders often draw on the same narrow pool of MEP, façade, steelwork and other specialists.

CONSTRUCTION OUTPUT FALLS AT SLOWEST RATE SINCE JANUARY (see story here)

Construction buyers have seen the slowest downturn in industry output for eight months. The bellwether S&P Global UK Construction Purchasing Managers' Index recorded 46.1 in September – up from 44.3 in August but still below the 50 growth mark. Slower rates of contraction were seen in all the residential, commercial and civil engineering segments. Commercial construction (index at 48.5) saw the greatest resilience, with business activity falling only marginally and at the weakest pace since May 2025. Housing activity (40.7) remained the worst-performing area of the construction sector.

INFRASTRUCTURE WORK SET TO LEAD STEADY CONSTRUCTION GROWTH (see story here)

The UK construction market is set for steady growth over the next few year as infrastructure leads the recovery from the current doldrums. Latest forecasts from consultancy McBains predict construction output is anticipated to grow by 1.8% in 2027, strengthening to 2.8% in 2028, before moderating to 2.3% in 2029 and 2.1% in 2030. Infrastructure is expected to be the star performer with work increasing by 14% between 2026 and 2031 while residential and commercial development experience a more selective recovery.

THOSE WE HAVE LOST (AND SOMETIMES REGAINED)

CARE HOME CONSTRUCTION FIRM FALLS INTO ADMINISTRATION (see story here)

More than 50 jobs have been lost after administrators were appointed to Torsion Projects, a Leeds-based care home construction project specialist which forms part of the wider Torsion group of businesses. It had faced mounting financial challenges in recent months, the administrators said, notably because of the termination of contracts, which had left it with limited cashflow to cover its costs and remain solvent.