

## **CECA Wales Briefing, June 2023**

### **Education and Employment Links in Wales**

Dear Chair,

I am writing on behalf of the Civil Engineering Contractors Association Wales to outline challenges the construction and infrastructure sector continues to face in recruiting skilled young people to pursue careers in this field.

We believe gaps in links between education and employment need to be addressed as a matter of urgency as recruitment issues are inhibiting business growth, opportunities for young people and those from disadvantaged communities at a time when they are desperately needed.

The new curriculum in Wales includes an emphasis on encouraging educational establishments to engage with businesses, however this remains a challenging area and we believe greater focus needs to be placed on this part of the curriculum moving forward.

Clear and consistent engagement routes between education and employers could lead to:

- Businesses providing supporting resources to deliver aspects of the curriculum;
- Better preparation for learners entering the workplace, particularly those wishing to pursue a more vocational approach;
- Greater encouragement for less academically focused learners and/or those from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter the workplace; and,
- Greater diversity across the construction sector.

We note and welcome the [report](#) by Hefin David MS published on this topic, which is very helpful and we would support the recommendations. We welcome this report as a key building block in this discussion and moving forward with the report's recommendations, would urge the Welsh Government to seek wider engagement with businesses to ensure an even deeper business perspective is included in the debate.

Our view is that current social value policies could be much better utilised to support business engagement with schools. Construction companies working for the public sector are already familiar with the concept of social value and community benefits whereby added value is offered to a construction client (eg a local authority) over and above the delivery of a specific piece of work (eg a new road or railway station). This often entails the provision of jobs for local people, local purchasing, apprenticeships and training opportunities. This could quite easily be extended to providing support to schools in the form of work placements, site visits, careers support and, more specifically, direct delivery of parts of the new curriculum but from a workplace rather than schoolteacher perspective. For example,



delivering maths and physics experiences in the context of live civil engineering projects. There are examples of this being delivered but these tend to be in an ad hoc fashion and not consistently across the education system.

The current social value “benefits” delivery model has many inefficiencies which inevitably lead to a dilution of value and in many cases there is little or no oversight of the value that is actually delivered.

We propose that an alternative approach would be to identify willing school “partners” within a certain geographic area (eg local authority boundaries) to set out how they would like to be supported (eg X number of hours per week to help deliver aspects of the curriculum) and for successful contractors to be assigned a partner and to deliver those requirements over an agreed period of time. This gives the contractor certainty of what is required and the school continuity and consistency of delivery.

Ceca Wales sees the new curriculum as the perfect opportunity to develop these opportunities to develop and sustain the future workforce and would welcome the Committee’s consideration of this issue and our suggestions.

If it would be helpful, we would be happy to provide further information and evidence to the Committee on this topic.

Kind regards,

Ed Evans, Director CECA Wales