

March

Build to Last - the industry reaction to sustainable construction

The ConstructionSkills 'Build to Last' programme is about preparing the UK construction industry to build a sustainable future. ConstructionSkills has taken positive steps in developing an understanding of current industry thinking about sustainability and is working with the industry and other partners, towards a ten-year strategic plan for skills development across the construction industry.

Annie Hall, Head of Sustainability, explains the problem: "The industry does not universally accept the need to change its practices. The consultation, conducted as part of this work, showed that whilst many believed the construction industry had a role to play, few felt that sustainability complemented their drive for performance improvement or responded to current client requirements."

In November 2004 around 100 delegates from across the industry gathered to discuss sustainability in construction. The event followed a review of current trends on sustainable construction, commissioned by CITB-ConstructionSkills.

The report, which is now available, includes our survey results, the recommendations from the earlier top-line review, the outputs from the workshop discussions and a plan that will be the starting point for the 10-year strategic plan.

Four themes with prioritised tasks emerged from the workshop. However, these tasks are not wholly the remit of ConstructionSkills as there are many stakeholders involved whose role and remit better places them for certain action. Relevant partners will be consulted on these over the coming months.

The four themes are:

- Developing a better understanding of sustainability amongst clients, architects, contractors and suppliers and what it means to their respective practices
- Lobbying to create a climate for change that includes the right balance of legislative pressure and commercial advantages
- Developing the skills in the industry so that the people employed can specify, design, build and operate sustainable structures
- Creating and communicating best practice to help translate the good words about sustainable construction into actions that work on the ground

The sustainability agenda has been supported by UK Government Strategy since 1999 yet the research suggests it is new to many and convincing to only a few in the construction industry. This sector requires far stronger leadership and far more robust arguments if it is to even consider changing practices. As the largest industry body in the UK and the one that spans all aspects of the construction industry, ConstructionSkills is uniquely placed to facilitate the changes needed to ensure industry 'Build to Last'.