

Construction Sector Interviews: Thematic Analysis

DORSET LSIP

INSIGHTFUL RESEARCH TEAM

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Introduction

This report will outline the findings of the Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) research in the construction sector. These findings will provide valuable insight into the current feelings of employers in Dorset and what they desire from education providers. The research methodology used to gather these findings was based on best practices from current literature and is briefly outlined below.

Construction executive summary

During one-to-one interviews, employers expressed a wide range of views on skill gaps in the construction industry, leading to an array of clear themes detailing their perspectives on how to best support the industry and learners to succeed. The most pressing issues demonstrated by employers were in relation to a lack of skilled trades. Trades of all kinds are currently short in labour, and employers suggested that there is a lack of people coming into the sector to solve those labour gaps. On specific skill needs, key areas highlighted were in fundamental skills. These relate to skills in accuracy and measurements, working to plans and drawings, and design skills. These are key, fundamental skills needed in construction; however these skills are often lacking in employees. The non-technical aspect of skills was deemed less of a priority in this sector, however, there is a need for greater levels of work ethic, work readiness, attitude and reliability in employees.

Employers outlined the importance of apprenticeships as a solution to the skills deficits, however, many have experienced significant barriers in being able to offer apprenticeships. Where it has been outlined that apprenticeships in the sector have been cut and often aren't offered at colleges, small businesses can find it difficult to take apprentices on due to lack of resources. Another key area for improvement was in the increased development of skills through hands-on experience opportunities. Hands-on development is valued highly by employers, and particularly with the high level of job difficulty of many roles, more hands-on experience opportunities would allow learners to have a greater level of skills development to deal with that difficulty. Finally, as with the lack of skilled trades in the industry, many businesses are suffering with staff attrition,

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where competition with larger cities and other industries is often a barrier. There is a need for more encouragement of the younger generation to take place in Dorset to make the industry more appealing to the younger generation and increase the numbers of young people coming into construction.

Employers also outlined perspectives on net zero. Largely, they expect future needs to be related to the integration of new technologies, new products, and new building materials, of which there will need to be an increased level of understanding and knowledge acquisition opportunities on using those new technologies.

Table 1.

Overview of most frequent interview content

Technical Skills		Causes of Technical Skills Deficits		Business Needs	
Carpenters	14	General Labour Shortage	21	General Labour Shortage	21
Bricklayers	13	Education courses	14	Encouraging the next generation	5
Fundamental Capabilities	11	Availability of local college courses	13	A need for industry to adapt	5
Product Knowledge	10	Availability of Apprenticeships	12	Upskilling takes time	4
Design Skills	8	Nowhere to upskill locally	12	More succession planning	4
Mathematics	7	Lack of encouragement to join industry	11	Apprenticeship support	2
Floor-fitting skills	6	Availability of Training Courses	10	Specific Skill Set	2
Joiners	5	Generational Differences	8	Localised Manufacturing Area	2

Cross sector methodology

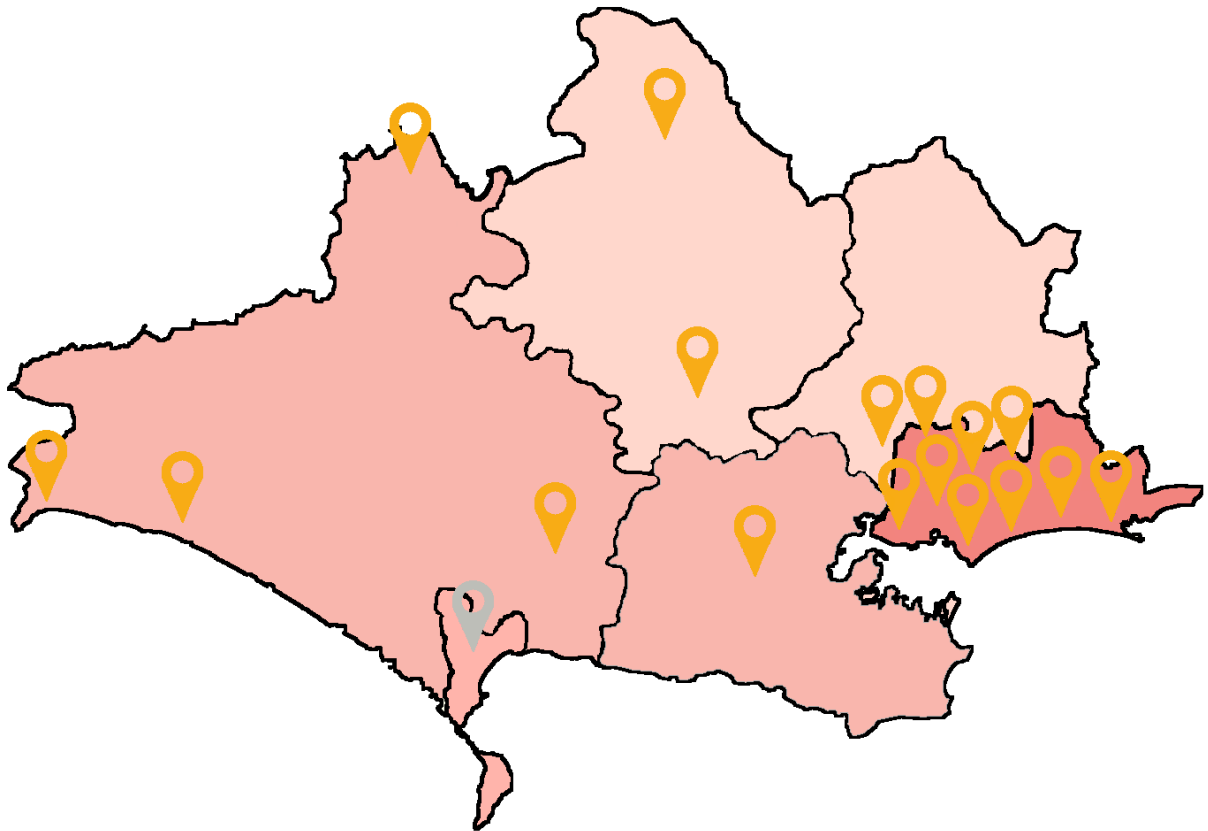
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Firstly, a psychometric survey was created and distributed to employers to assess their satisfaction with employee skill levels. This survey was carefully developed in a 3-stage process of item generation, theoretical analysis, and psychometric analysis. The aims of these stages respectively were to generate items that are clearly understood and relevant, to ensure the items have clear definitions and measure the intended construct, and to test the item's reliability and validity. This resulted in a final survey of 12 questions measuring employee's technical skill level, employee's non-technical skill level and the organisation's preparedness for the transition to net-zero. This survey was distributed by the research team and Dorset Chamber resulting in 386 responses. In follow up to this survey, several employers were invited to participate in a qualitative 1:1 interview. For a survey response or interview to be eligible it had to meet the following criteria: the individual must be responsible in some way for ensuring staff have the skills required, the business must operate within Dorset and it must fit into one of the targeted sectors. Interview recruitment was challenging, so to supplement the number of interviews and target specific areas that were underrepresented, direct interview recruitment was used in conjunction with leads and partners provided by Dorset Chamber. The interviews were semi-structured, and 17 interviews were conducted from the construction sector between 17/01/23 and 08/03/23.

The interviews were transcribed and anonymised by the research team increasing familiarity with the data. An inductive 'bottom up' process of thematic analysis was used to identify themes from the interviews and involved two rounds of coding². The first-round organised data into meaningful groups and the quotes from these groups were used to create a code book which was then applied during the second round of coding. Additional codes were added as needed during the second round of coding and the whole process was collaborative and iterative. After the second round of coding was complete, themes were identified by multiple researchers individually, reviewed collaboratively and then finalised.

The following report describes the final themes in detail and provides a clear representation of the views of employers regarding skill deficits, the causes of these deficits, potential solutions and where they are in the transition to net-zero.

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B.C.P	22		
North Dorset	6		
East Dorset	6		
South Dorset	12		
West Dorset	11		
		Survey responses:	57
		Interview responses:	17

Construction Detailed Interview Analysis.

1.0 Skills Needs

All Skilled trades are needed

The construction industry in Dorset is suffering from an overall general labour shortage. Many interview participants stated that it is difficult to recruit people to fill roles, even when job adverts have been available for extended periods. Of the 19 participants interviewed 15 reported difficulties finding suitable skilled core

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trades. Several stressed the high demand for core trades has led to labour prices increasing, without an increase in the quality of workmanship or output. It is now commonly reported that trades people are increasing their prices 'because they can'.

In terms of the general labour shortage, much of the current skill gap needs are related to trades. The key trades that businesses are finding it hard to recruit for are carpenters, bricklayers, joiners, roofers, floorers, and electricians. Having a greater volume of skilled personnel in these trades is seen to be very important for construction businesses and will be required to help bridge the labour gaps in their workforce. Within these trades, there is also a need for skillset flexibility across different aspects of the roles.

Transcript 12 "And why do you think that is? P: You tell me! There doesn't seem to be the guys around anymore that there used to be. A lot of them are getting out the industry"

Transcript 13 "Yes I mean, you still need joinery and therefore you still need joiners. You still need carpenters because you know if you are working with a timber frame you need people who've got that experience and I mean, I live in Bridport and it's very difficult to get a decent builder to come within the next 6 months so there is clearly ... you know we know there is skill shortages."

Transcript 14 "I: is there any particular trades that you struggle to get. P: all of them really, plastering, electrics, good brick layers in particular."

Transcript 6 "There doesn't seem to be any shortage of people that want to do office work but I've noticed at the actual physical labour side of things, there's a shortage. There's a shortage of skilled people, there's people who

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would be perfectly adequate at it but they just don't want to put the effort in."

Current Trade specific skills are good

Individual trades were all reported to have a specialised skill sets specific to the particular profession. In general, participants stated the skill levels of experienced individuals in these professions was good, few were able to provide trade specific skill deficits. In interviews the quality of experienced carpenters, plasterers, electricians, etc was praised. In several instances when participants were asked if there was anything missing from the local college courses it was stated that all the basics were covered.

Often when asked about what trade skills needed to be developed, it was suggested the primary problem was not skill shortages, but labour shortages, interviews were highly focused on the difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff. From this it can be reasonably inferred that until labour shortages are addressed many in the construction sector lack the capacity to engage with skill development.

Accuracy and measurement

The ability to work accurately, to take correct measurements and work to plans was seen as a foundational skill that all new learners entering the construction sector needed to learn. This could involve basic skills such as learning to read a tape measure quickly and reliably, to working from highly complicated plans and drawings.

Transcript 8 "Yeah, you've got to be able to use measure measurement because we're building off plans now. We were before but nobody took a great deal of notice of them, but now you've got to be particularly with costs becoming smaller and you can't afford to make mistakes and when the kids

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come out of school or whatever they've been doing, they can't read the plan and can't use a tape measure, you know, that that's ridiculous."

Working to plans and drawings

The ability to read and work to plans accurately and quickly was viewed as a skill deficit. In the construction sector individuals need the ability to make sense of a variety of drawings. For example, a carpenter installing a roof might need to interpret the truss manufactures drawings or cut roof plan, the architectural drawings, and the structural engineering drawings. In practice, the onsite ability to read multiple drawings is very important for checking for discrepancies between parties' designs and ensuring high quality construction.

Some interviews in more senior roles stressed that if a person wanted to progress in their career a developing skill in working to drawings was vital, and this was often the skill that separated senior and junior members of staff.

Design skills

There is a demand for design skills within the sector. Additionally, the use of digital design is currently increasing so skills in this area are becoming increasingly important.

Transcript 13 "So if we are in this shift and I think we will be in this shift more toward digital design and fabrication. What we are lacking in Dorset and particularly beyond Bournemouth and Poole in the more rural sort of part of the county. I think you're lacking people who have those sort of design skills. So whether it's from a 3D design background or an architecture background. You could say well that's not construction but I think for me ... the ability to sort of integrate a design understanding and an engineering with a practical construction understanding is really important"

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Non-technical skills: Work Ethic, work readiness, attitude, and reliability

With many trades having to conduct physically demanding work all year round in all-weather it is unsurprising that many interviewed were keen to stress the importance of resilience to challenging working conditions. It was stressed that people entering the construction industry should gain exposure to their working conditions as soon as possible so they could come to a realistic understanding of the working conditions they will face in their careers.

Across interviews the importance of new learning motivation and desire to learn was stressed as well as an ability to work hard. Many participants stated they felt younger learners entering the construction sector lacked “work ethic”, and several felt that younger generations preferred office-based jobs, or jobs that were not physically demanding.

There is a demonstrated desire for having employees who demonstrate positive attitudes, reliability, and work ethic. However, these are areas that they feel current employees, are lacking.

Transcript 5 “I: So, I know you said you took on some guys but now you don’t have anyone on the books, why is that? P: Well they were alright at the job but they just became unreliable, not showing up to work. Some you would need to really keep on them. Some Were okay you just needed to keep on top of them.”

Transcript 6 “So you know, but I dealt with electrician back when I was doing home improvements and stuff. Sparkies are always onsite and they always

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charge most money. people a lot of people want to be an electrician to make the most money but don't want to put the effort in"

Transcript 1 *"The soft skills are really important to our business because we have an "anything is possible" mentality so we cannot afford to have staff with tunnel vision. If a client wants 2+2 to equal 5, then we will make it so."*

2.0 Employer Perspectives on Challenges and Causes of Skills Deficits

Education does not have the resources to provide high-quality skills development

Along with the notion that there is a lack of relevant courses in the local area, there is an emerging theme that the current education provision in the area is severely lacking in resources to develop young people with the skills required in construction.

Transcript 9 *"So as far as getting apprentices and doing their NVQ level 2's, the college actually know is actually doing alright. What we're finding is, if the college is doing NVQ3 for bricklaying, and we've had a couple of guys go through that with them. They don't do that anymore. So if the college had more space in the NVQ2, either physically had enough tutors or space, I guess it's tutors or whatever, they're getting people who want to do the NVQ2 but then they can't take them because they don't have enough space to teach them."*

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The industry is suffering from an ageing workforce due to a lack of encouragement

There has been a recurring concern about the lack of young people coming through and the resultant ageing workforce in the construction industry. In combination with this, there was the general feeling that there has been a reduction in how much encouragement the younger generation are being given to seek a career in the construction industry in comparison with other sectors. Businesses feel that this lack of encouragement and the outward perception that construction is a less glamorous career is severely impacting the number of young people coming through into the industry.

Transcript 7 "Most skilled people are in their 50 and 60s so we are running out of skilled people. They're all retiring."

Transcript 10 "Yep, a lot worse. There isn't the great volume of young people coming into the trade. The ones that are left, our age 50s, haven't got much longer to go before we're thinking we've had enough lets have our pension isn't it."

Transcript 1 "Skills are in short supply not least because good candidates are likely to be sucked into London. [redacted] is doing a good job of producing students with digital skills though their preferences tend to be in finance, fashion and sport rather than engineering and construction which is seen as less glamorous."

Reduction in Apprenticeships

Businesses feel that the reduction in apprenticeship opportunities has resulted in the overall labour shortage and in the shortage of important skills needed. There is

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a perception of an overall lack of apprenticeships being offered in the area for all key trade roles needed.

Transcript 2 *"I: So, what you're saying is that you've struggled to find apprentices? P: Yes, we do struggle to find apprentices, yes"*

Transcript 11 *"So from a Dorset perspective you've got [redacted] both of whom provide the site supervisor, level 4 supervisor, but last time I checked didn't provide any other technical apprenticeships whatsoever."*

Barriers to Apprenticeship Schemes

Along with the overall reduction in apprenticeships being offered in the construction industry, there have been noted barriers limiting the ability of some apprenticeships being offered. Some of these barriers surround the idea that the time-consuming nature of upskilling apprentices from scratch takes time away from their current work, which might not be feasible for small businesses, where the financial output could be a strain on the business. There was a further mention of certain regulations being in place limiting apprenticeships from being offered.

Transcript 10 *"Absolutely, or having any apprentice drags the ... drags me down as well, because obviously I've got to show him what to do, and if he asks why I've got to explain why. Person 1: yeah Person 2: So all of a sudden what job was going to take 2 hours is going to take 3 hours."*

Transcript 8 *"I: Why isn't it attractive at the moment? P: Basically there's not enough support, I mean I don't know if you've ever tried teaching the apprentice that comes in from cold and it takes you about two years before they are any use to you and you know a lot of the older people can't be*

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bothered to train youngsters although equally so, there's a lot of old happy to teach younger kids the skills, so it works both ways but yeah..."

Transcript 10 *"There's another big problem as well. When you've got an apprentice, a young lad, you're paying them ... I think last time I had one it was ... you're having to pay them like £90 a week. And you're paying £90 a week and does begrudge you a bit thinking, yeah you get a bit of money off the CITB but it's, you're getting paid a lot for not a lot, sort of thing."*

Staff/Apprentice attrition due to job difficulty, earning potential, and industry competition

There was a recurring theme surrounding the propensity of staff and apprentices to drop out of the industry and the incidence of losing staff to other companies.

Potential causes of this were related to the aspects of job difficulty, where there is a lack of required skills needed to perform certain tasks, higher earning potential elsewhere in other sectors, and industry competition with companies/larger cities.

Transcript 7 *"Had 10 apprentices in last few years but only 2 completed. 8 went off to work at Tesco's as they got more money and easier work... Some people who leave the industry go off to be kitchen fitters or cabinet makers and probably make more money."*

Transcript 12 *"And do you think why do you think that is Dorset? You tell me! There doesn't seem to be the guys around anymore that there used to be. A lot of them are getting out the industry."*

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Lack of hands-on experience to build work-readiness

Work readiness from education was an issue felt by businesses. There was the perception that students in education do not get the required hands-on experience to build up the required skills, while education has too strong a focus on simply passing people through qualifications rather than providing them with the skillset needed to move straight into employment.

Transcript 6 "There's apprentice joiners, what are they, what's lacking there? What do they need to be taught more of? They'd be out in the Workshop four days a week in touch for a college, one day a week. The first two weeks first in college, they weren't even allowed to use a drill. They were they were just standing there and watch the, you know, watch the teacher. And then the first two months he was in the workshop, he wasn't allowed to use any tools. He was just there to observe."

Transcript 4 "Because surely like a college level education or an NVQ. Isn't that there to prevent that? You'd think so But I know from dealing with the joiners and stuff, they have people in my class, they can't even read the construction roll"

Transcript 5 "I: okay so what areas are they struggling in P: its all over really, its not pointing, its not muck work its all of it. Really they just need more time on the tools at college that is what you need to learn."

3.0 Employers' Perspectives on Preferred Solutions to Skill Deficits

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Solutions

Apprenticeships are highly valued for advancing the business workforce

Apprenticeships are valued extremely highly by businesses. Not only do they feel that the reduction in apprenticeships has caused the general labour shortage in the Dorset construction industry, but they feel that apprenticeships are perfect for providing learners with the best mix of knowledge and practical skills development to suit the specified needs of those businesses. Therefore, the most commonly suggested solution to the skills deficit in the construction industry was found to be through an increase in apprenticeships to cover all key trades.

Transcript 9 "I: Tell me about the apprentice schemes are you a fan of those?

P: I am a fan of them. Yeah, definitely, definitely."

Transcript 5 "I: So, what about the work readiness stuff, do they come ready to work. P: Yeah, the apprentices they are often dead keen, they just want to get on the tools, like anything, they are just like a dog with a new toy."

Transcript 2 "I: Would you take on an apprentices if they were there? P: If they were more available? If they were more available and willing to learn and to get on, then yeah."

Whilst many valued apprenticeships, several businesses stated that changes to funding no longer made taking on apprentices worthwhile for employers. Many stressed that training apprentices was a lot of work, and that when an apprentice stated it was a long time before they were able to work independently without supervision.

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Hands-on experience is vital to developing skills and work readiness

While gaining the theoretical knowledge of construction is important, businesses have highlighted the importance of people gaining on-site, hands-on experience in carrying out roles. The main benefits of this are deemed to be an increase in the quality of technical skills, an increase in work readiness from education, and an increase in self-confidence to carry out tasks on-site in comparison to solely in the college environment. Therefore, businesses feel that there is a need to provide learners the adequate hands-on experience to fully develop skills to a higher level, and there is the belief that this is not fully achievable through college courses alone. This could point to a potential need for placements/on-site opportunities.

Transcript 5 *"With brick laying its one of the things you learn on site. I was quite lucky in that the person that had me on as an apprentice kept me on the tools."*

Transcript 2 *"I wouldn't say it's a pain, I'd say it's probably more beneficial being on site - actually hands on learning rather than actually going to like a college course. You definitely learn more being on the job"*

Transcript 6 *"a lot of people, a lot from college have qualifications, but only because they sat by and done the test, not because they've actually done it, if that makes sense?"*

More local provision that is relevant to needed sectors

Where one of the major concerns held by businesses was related to the lack of local provision to upscale locally, causing some businesses to have to go outside of the county to access adequate training and college provision, this points to an

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increased demand for more local training and college provision directly targeted to the construction industry.

Transcript 3 “Okay, what sort of training is available in the local area? I don’t think there is any local training in the area, to be honest with you.”

Transcript 9 “To get someone who’s been bricklaying for 10-15 years say and he comes up, my cards run out, right you need your NVQ2 now. And as I say I’m going out of county, I’m going to Hampshire to get trade assessments to do it. I don’t know if the college would be able to help with, particularly”

Transcript 11 “Most of them will be over 18 anyway, but there’s already, sort of, restrictions because it’s the universities that are branching out into doing apprenticeships. So there’s all sorts of things that we’re experiencing because [redacted] don’t offer that... So , you know, we are focusing on the market and trying to be more with the providers but the availability of provision is certainly very obvious, you know, the lack of availability of provision for the construction sector is obvious.”

Teaching and training to be relevant to the current and future skill needs

Where businesses have shown an increased demand for more local training and college provision in Dorset, and for students to be given more access to hands-on, on-site learning experience, there has also been a need to teach students/learners with the relevant construction skills needed in the current climate and future skill needs. Largely, these skills were found to be within the teaching of the fundamentals, the teaching of product knowledge, and the teaching of using modern technology and equipment. This, along with further on-site experience,

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would allow for people coming through to have up-to-date theoretical knowledge and practical skills relevant to the needs of the industry.

Transcript 8 "I: Well, it's interesting you speak about working off plans and stuff. Is that something you think that would be fundamental for colleges to teach, working to drawings? P: They should be"

Transcript 14: "so rather than just the basics of the trade you think colleges should be teaching people to work to drawings and get over things? P: I would say so yeah."

Transcript 2: "So, different manufacturers have different latexes, different thicknesses, different ways of working with wood vs LVT vs plastic. So is that something that they should learn in college? Yes I think that would be better in a college or a classroom, yes."

Transcript 13: (Speaking about how new technologies/materials will be needed for net-zero) "P: That sort of better understanding of materials and how that can, how those can seed into particular trades within the construction industry. I: And I think its fair to say that that type of education can definitely start at the post 16 training can't it. P: Definitely before I was doing this I was more involved in the local food sector in Dorset."

A need for the industry to adapt and conduct succession planning

As the industry suffers from an ageing workforce and an overall general labour shortage, some have suggested that there is a need for the industry and construction businesses to be more forward-thinking in their succession planning and to adapt to changes before they happen rather than allowing issues to build up

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over time. This aspect will be especially important when it comes to adapting to the needs to meet the transition to net zero.

Transcript 4 *“As a business we’ve not ...we’ve done a lot of it but our industry has not been very good at it. We’ve all been realising that we’re going to end up having a skill shortage every time ... it happens all the time. We’ve not really adjusted.”*

Transcript 13 *“So we’re trying to kind of keep the jobs in Dorset, that we have to have the industry in Dorset recognising the long term trends and saying okay how to we deal with it in terms of a more localised level.”*

Transcript 8 *“I: So you're saying it's not just that people don't have the skills to install energy efficient buildings and meet these net zero targets, it's they don't have the motivation? P: That's right. And of course, a lot of the old builders say, oh well, we never do it like that before, why do we have to know? And they just don't appreciate the value of saving energy and improving the energy efficiency of the building.”*

Transcript 13 *“Or it might be, for example persuading local joinery companies to use local timber rather than just going to Travis Perkins. So there’s the whole thing about having a better understanding of the available local materials and how you work with different timbers. So I think that, that’s a key area for us that we think is lacking. That sort of better understanding of materials and how that can, how those can seed into particular trades within the construction industry.”*

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Encouragement of the younger generation

As there has been concern around the lack of younger people coming into the construction industry, there was a recurrent theme around the need to market the industry in a more appealing manner in order to encourage the younger generation to enter careers in construction. Again, there is the feeling that in education there is more of a drive towards digital, finance, and other sectors, rather than construction-based careers. Many felt that encouraging the younger generation needed to start much earlier and construction should not be viewed as a career for “non academic” students.

Transcript 10 “And I think coming through, sort of thing, nobody is being pushed ... not pushed into the trade ... what’s the word ... encouraged to come into the trade, I think that’s the word. Person 1: Yeah, and has it always been like this, or is this a recent problem? Person 2: Back to the 90’s it started I reckon”

Transcript 13 “And I think it’s the same with construction. You know, construction has a bit of that same reputation of oh well you’re not academic, so you go off to learning carpentry or whatever. And I think that trying to almost bring it into the 21st century and say actually construction is changing, it’s quite an exciting sector, you’ve got all this new stuff going on whether it’s new material or new ways of fabricating. You know that to me is very exciting and I think for young people as well they are seeing that as something they want to move into. I think it just gets unstuck from that old traditional rut and I think that’s a good thing.”

Transcript 8 “I mean, I do a lot of work in the schools on talks and for mock interviews and that type of thing and talking to young people and also years

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ago we always used to draw from the young lads that didn't really want to stay at school, let alone university and always causing trouble as they wanted to leave. So we would take them into the Construction industry, put as a labourer or something, and then get them working with a brickie or plaster or chippie, whatever it was, and then they would gain their qualifications through that route and of course that sort of source of labour disappeared when we were going to send everybody to universities and everybody got to stay at school until they're about 18 or whatever, you know, that left a massive skills gap for the construction industry."

Transcript 1 *"[redacted] is doing a good job of producing students with digital skills though their preferences tend to be in finance, fashion and sport rather than engineering and construction which is seen as less glamorous."*

4.0 Perspective on the Net Zero transition

Net zero Business needs

General awareness of modern technologies

As discussed previously, construction employers expect a wide range of new technologies and methods to become more commonplace within the workplace, and these new technologies and methods will be essential for the transition to net-zero. There is a need for more teaching and knowledge on modern technologies to improve the general awareness and knowledge on the applicability of those processes.

Transcript 9 *"Yeah, I'm really interested in the changes to construction industry, because there is a big push to energy efficiency, there's a big push*

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towards modern methods of construction, I'd love to hear about (redacted)'s thoughts on how that can be improved. Yeah, because he has lots of things now, stuff like fire barrier... and it's also when we were starting to these things didn't exist then and now it's suddenly part of our job. And different mech test and metal pieces that need to be put together before we can put certain things in them and it's like hold on they're not teaching them this at college. I would say fundamentals okay, but all this new modern stuff, fire barrier and things, they're not picking up."

Transcript 13 *"I suppose the bottom line is that every report you read says the industry has got to change, every report says it's got to shift towards modern methods of construction, every report says that it's got to change the materials worked with because of the embodied carbon in those materials."*

Transcript 17 *"I: So it's more the renewable side of it you need basically. P: Yeah yeah totally. The renewables is a big bit that [redacted] is missing out on."*

Specific product knowledge

Similar to the integration of more modern technologies into construction, a wide range of products and new building materials are expected to be important for the transition to net zero. It is expected that many of these products will be important for the transition to net zero and therefore increased knowledge levels on those products and their used will be important going forward for the transition to net zero.

Transcript 13 *"So if we are going to see that shift then, you know design comes first but then I think there's a whole area around materials. So most training, or almost all training is focused around traditional materials. But*

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things like concrete, brick and steel are just, you know, in 10 years time it is going to be much harder to use those materials because of their embodied carbon. And so people have to start understanding other materials. So it might be the replacement of petrochemical based insulation boards with wood fibre boards for example.”

Transcript 13 *“And I think the other, the other area is ... I guess it’s going to be, or there is and there needs to be so much emphasis on the embodied carbon within building and the need to reduce that and therefore the need to change the materials we work with.”*

5.0 Business Needs and Recruitment Focusses

A need for an adaptive Industry

During interviews, businesses outlined a need to be better adapting to current trends. There is a feeling that skills shortages will continue to crop up while the industry stays stagnant and does not adapt effectively to new processes and skills.

Transcript 4 *“As a business we’ve not ...we’ve done a lot of it but our industry has not been very good at it. We’ve all been realising that we’re going to end up having a skill shortage every time ... it happens all the time. We’ve not really adjusted.”*

Transcript 13 *“So we’re trying to kind of keep the jobs in Dorset, that we have to have the industry in Dorset recognising the long term trends and saying okay how to we deal with it in terms of a more localised level.”*

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Transcript 8 *“So you're saying it's not just that people don't have the skills to install energy efficient buildings and meet these net zero targets, it's they don't have the motivation? That's right. And of course a lot of the old builders says, oh well, we never do it like that before, why do we have to know? And they just don't appreciate the value of of saving energy and improving the energy efficiency of the building.”*

Encouraging the younger generation

As noted within the previous section on employers' perspectives on solutions to skill deficits, there is an industry wide need for more encouragement of the younger generation. Businesses would place high value on more young people coming into the industry, and to do this, there needs to be greater encouragement of the younger generation, and greater awareness of construction to appeal to more people and attract them into the industry.

Transcript 8 “Whereas if they could go leave that school, which you can do, they can actually leave school and go into an apprenticeship in construction and then it doesn't seem to be promoted particularly well which then helps the schools and it helps the construction industry.”

Transcript 13 *“And I think it's the same with construction. You know, construction has a bit of that same reputation of oh well you're not academic so you go off to learning carpentry or whatever. And I think that trying to almost bring it into the 21st century and say actually construction is changing, it's quite an exciting sector, you've got all this new stuff going on whether it's new material or new ways of fabricating. You know that to me is very exciting and I think for young people as well they are seeing that as*

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something they want to move into. I think it just gets unstuck from that old traditional rut and I think that's a good thing."

Transcript 11 *"We provide additional support for them, so we have mentors that work with them and help them with life skills and sort their college placement and stuff, so we're much more focussed on the next generation coming into the industry."*

Apprenticeships

Within recruitment, employers place most value on taking on apprentices and allowing them to develop skills to suit the specific needs of the business and gain hands-on learning development. Because of this, there will be a need for more apprentice opportunities to be available, and for more young people to come into the industry with interests in completing apprenticeships.

Transcript 2 *"Yeah you just take on a lad, take him on an apprentice and you slowly teach them different floors and when you think he's up to scratch you send him off and do the NVQ."*

Conclusion

Overall, the themes generated from the one-to-one interview engagements with employers offered a clear, detailed outlook on the landscape of the construction industry.

The most pressing concern outlined was the need for more skilled trades of all kinds. The construction industry is being hampered by a labour shortage of skilled trades and recruitment is particularly difficult. Due to the labour shortage, competition for trades is fierce, meaning that some businesses will continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining staff. On skill shortages, the most pressing

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concerns were related to the development of fundamental skills, such as understanding measurements, working to plans and drawings, and design skills.

From the interviews, employers provided clear perspectives on the solutions that would help solve some of the challenges faced in their industry. Employers value apprenticeships extremely highly, and more frequent availability of apprenticeship opportunities was by far the most prominent desire for businesses. Related to this, is the need for more hands-on experience. Employers value employees having developed skills through practical means to gain a greater appreciation for different techniques and methods. Additionally, there is a pressing need for more local training and college courses, and for those courses to be more relevant and up to date with the needs of the industry. There is the feeling that some courses can be outdated, and there is a need for more courses to be relevant to current trends to develop needed skills.

Additionally, interviews uncovered relevant needs for businesses in the construction sector. A major area highlighted was in the need for industry adaptation and succession planning to keep up with trends. There was a suggestion that without improved succession planning, new skill gaps will continue to appear within the industry, therefore there is a need to solve this. Similar, is the need for the encouragement of the younger generation. Succession planning has to occur in more effectively attracting younger people into the construction industry by making the industry more appealing and a place that young people can see as an industry where successful and interesting careers can be formed.

Finally, insights were gained on the transition to net zero. Mainly, employers outlined transitions towards using modern technology, products, and building materials to have considerable importance for the transition to net zero. There is importance in improving knowledge and awareness on the applicability of those

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modern technologies and products so that both employers and employees are better aligned to move towards the transition to net zero.