



**Gillian Keegan MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills  
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Peter Lauener  
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23 April 2021

Dear Peter,

**Annual Priorities letter to the CITB, 2021-22**

The CITB has an Important role in supporting the success of the construction sector – enabling us to achieve our ambition to build 300,000 homes a year, while also developing our infrastructure. In order to succeed we need a construction industry that is productive and innovative, something that can only be achieved by sustained investment in skills. This letter sets out the Government's priorities for the CITB, it should be considered alongside the Construction Sector Deal and our broader commitments on technical education – including the introduction of T levels.

The emergence of the global Covid-19 pandemic early in 2020 has had an unprecedented impact upon all areas of the economy and the construction industry, while not as bad as hospitality or retail, has been significantly affected as a result. In response to the immediate impact of the first lockdown on industry you put in place a Skills Stability Plan for 2020-21 as a first step in a programme of actions to help support employers retain existing skills within their workforce. Following this the CITB worked with industry, key stakeholders and government to identify the priority skills and training that will be needed to support industry as we look ahead to a post-pandemic economy.

As you know, skills policy is a devolved matter. The Devolved Administrations have their own priorities to meet the needs of their economies and distinct skills systems and these will be communicated separately.

The Government has seven priorities for CITB in England for the next 12 months:

- Leading on from the Skills Stability Plan provide help and support to the industry as it seeks to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the CITB must continue to help the industry to prepare for changes in the

supply of labour and skills needs resulting from the UK's exit from the EU. The CITB must continue to make demonstrative progress on the skills and training needed to develop our own talent and support the growth of the GB workforce.

- Continue to support the industry to develop the skills necessary to meet the Government's ambition to build 300,000 homes a year. To help achieve this goal it is expected that the CITB will continue to conduct research and work closely with organisations such as the Home Builders Federation; Homes England and the Federation of Master Builders and housing associations to understand the skill needs of home builders of a range of sizes, using traditional and modern methods; and to develop and deliver the appropriate support.
- Support the modernisation of the industry by working with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, procuring Departments, the CLC and industry bodies to plan and deliver the skills and progression routes needed by the construction sector now and in the future, especially those required to decarbonise the industry to Net Zero by 2050. The Government welcomes the work that is already underway in this respect. There should be a particular focus on the development of skills to support the adoption by the industry of digital technology and modern methods of construction, including those developed through the Transforming Construction Programme. As part of this modernisation, the CITB should continue to focus on the implications of the Grenfell Fire and ensure that appropriate training and routes to that training are established.
- Thank you for your engagement at a working level with government on Project Speed thus far. Your continued involvement with the Construction Skills Delivery Group supporting the development of policies and reforms, which address skill needs in the construction sector and support the objectives of Project Speed, is encouraged and valued. In particular, I would like you to continue to support the Improvement of the transfers system, so that unspent levy funds can better support apprenticeships in SME; introducing Construction Sector Traineeships to improve the supply of skilled labour and tradespeople, in both traditional and future skills and; the introduction of sector-specific apprenticeship flexibilities, to better recognise prior learning and experience and enable construction apprentices to complete their apprenticeship more quickly.
- Support the introduction of the Government's technical education reforms in the construction industry. This will include supporting employers to effectively engage with the apprenticeships programme and the FE sector, and to help develop the training that best meets employer needs. The CITB should continue to support the implementation of the new construction T levels, encouraging the provision of employer work placements, helping to shape reforms to improve and grow higher technical education. The CITB must continue to promote diversity in the construction sector. We would like to see the CITB commit to the development of a plan, with new and innovative ways, to increase and attract workers from more diverse backgrounds. This plan should have a clear timeframe and achievable milestones.

- Continue to strengthen and maintain positive relationships with industry as you move toward the next Consensus. In particular, you should represent with authority the needs of industry for skills and influence action on behalf of the sector. You should also continue to work in partnership with Prescribed Organisations to identify and address solutions that will reduce or better prevent industry skills gaps. You should use CITB's unique position as an industry-led ALB to inform, listen and influence central government planning for skills to support recovery in construction.
- Continue the implementation of your reform programme so that CITB is strategic, efficient and focused on current and future skills needs. This should include shaping the estates divestment plan for the post Covid-19 landscape. I would like CITB to clearly evidence the value the CITB delivery programmes bring across the sector. CITB should also develop a plan to mitigate the risk of industry skills challenges caused by the pandemic by maintaining the ability to deliver essential activity to maintain support for the industry as it recovers from recession. This plan must identify ways to minimise other expenditure and flex priorities according to emerging needs.

It is important that you work effectively across Government to develop a strategic approach to supporting construction skills in line with industry needs and national priorities. The sponsorship team in DfE will work with you to develop and strengthen these relationships.

I should be grateful if, through your quarterly strategic performance reviews, you would keep my officials updated on the delivery of your 2021-22 business plan and implementation of the remainder of CITB's reform programme.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Business and Industry, Jamie Hepburn MSP, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Julie James AM and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



Gillian Keegan MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills