



Response to the Institution for Civil Engineers consultation on the National Infrastructure Strategy – May 2021

With reference to consultation Questions 1, 4, 7, 10, 15

The Nuclear Skills Strategy Group is an industry-led strategic group working with employers, government and trade unions. It comprises:

- major employers who have the plans and the expenditure to drive developments in the nuclear sector, with representatives of the supply chain
- government departments responsible for nuclear development and skills leadership
- a representative of the trade unions in the nuclear industries

It is the UK's lead strategic skills forum for the civil and defence nuclear sector, and is accountable for developing a strategic approach to nuclear skills, addressing the skills infrastructure, processes and training provision needed to secure the required supply of qualified and competent people.

The NSSG has liaised with the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) to provide information on the current and future needs for skilled people in the sector as part of the overall approach to infrastructure planning.

The UK infrastructure planning process does not appear to take full account of planning for UK workforce capability and capacity. It is recommended that the NIC remit is augmented to include formal joint working with relevant recognised organisations and groups involved in UK employment and skills mapping in order to support decisions on infrastructure priorities. This will benefit the UK supply chain by strengthening local quality and productivity and benefit delivery of sustainable jobs with career pathways, including across low carbon industries.

A group of skills organisations and groups (listed below), representing the skills needs of most, if not all, of the infrastructure sector, has been collaborating on National Workforce Planning for the infrastructure sector in terms of numbers, regions and timings and skill level needed. Those collaborating as the Project Infrastructure Skills Team are:

- Construction – CITB
- Engineering Construction – ECITB
- Rail - NSAR
- Energy & Utilities – Energy & Utility Skills
- Nuclear - Nuclear Skills Strategy Group

These organisation and groups have been able to build on previously prepared and published work in responding to a request from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) to support their work in carrying out a Supply Chain Study to support assessment of inflationary cost pressures, supplier risk, sustainable output and labour supply and demand linked to the delivery of Government's future infrastructure and construction ambitions. In particular, the areas covered by these contributions were:

- A long term forecast (over a 10 year period) of future labour supply (ideally at a regional level) - taking into account the impacts of COVID-19 and EU Exit in so far as possible; and
- An assessment of key skills that are most critical to the delivery of infrastructure and construction schemes and are experiencing the greatest market scarcity.

If the skills evidence remains outside of the infrastructure planning process, delivery of projects is compromised through national skills shortages (quality and quantity). There will be increasing competition for skills and labour, both in terms of the existing workforce and prospective entrants, as the economy continues to recover post-COVID.

The workforce planning needs of the infrastructure sectors cannot and must not be viewed in isolation to what is occurring in other sectors whether they are seen to be in direct competition or not, or from education, skills and training policy priorities as a whole. As the NIC is the only national systematic approach, it is recommended that skills evidence is clearly stated as part of the NIC remit and part of the evidence-gathering assessment process.