

# News Release



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## INDUSTRY GATHERS TO FOCUS ON SKILLS SHORTAGE

The Building & Engineering Services Association (B&ES) is hosting a major conference in London on Wednesday, November 4 to help the industry tackle its growing skills shortage.

'Meeting the Industry's Skills Challenge in the new Training Landscape' will give delegates an insight into the government's Trailblazer apprenticeship scheme; sources of funding for apprentice training and the apprenticeship levy. Topics under discussion will also include manpower

shortages against the backdrop of rapidly rising workloads, and higher and degree-level apprenticeships.

A recent survey carried out by the CBI showed that 73% of contractors find it difficult to recruit the 'higher skilled' staff they need to keep up with growing demand for quality buildings. The CBI was also concerned the government's approach to apprenticeships would not deliver the high-quality, business-relevant training industry needed.

The B&ES conference, which will be chaired by Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan and is free to attend for all B&ES members, will demonstrate how employers can overcome barriers to recruitment and skills development to ensure they have the workforce they need to meet rising demand for specialist building engineering expertise.

It will take place at the Wellcome Collection close to London's Euston Station and will feature a range of training and education experts.

## **Smart**

The November 4 conference will also feature the presentation of the first new 'smart' Engineering Services SKILLcards, which have been created as part of the sector's efforts to modernise skills and competence record keeping.

SKILLcard, which is used by more than 50,000 mechanical engineering workers and professionals to provide proof of their skills and to access project sites in line with health and safety legislation, is the first of the specialist schemes in the construction industry to switch to chip-enabled smart technology.

The new cards will offer greater functionality and will enable employers and site managers to check the holder's qualifications and skills much more quickly; with information on the card accessible via smartphone,

card reader or tablet. The information held on the card will also be more accurate as it can be rapidly updated with any new skills and qualifications.

Since taking office in September, B&ES President Jim Marner has stressed the importance of developing a coherent strategy to confront skills shortages, which are threatening contractors' profitability despite the healthy growth in workloads across the industry.

He urged anyone affected by skills shortages and manpower challenges to attend the conference and play their part in developing a long-term strategy for the building engineering services sector.

"Employers must resist the temptation to take the easy option of cherry picking the best staff from competitors in order to resource projects," he said. "It is clear that companies are casting around desperately looking for skilled staff and it is not uncommon for whole project management teams to be head-hunted from one contractor to another, but that doesn't solve the underlying problem.

"While it is fitting that our most skilled people are getting the recognition and financial rewards they deserve; we do need to focus heavily on increasing the numbers of skilled people available and also on equipping our workforce with the new skills required by the modern construction market.

"We must also make sure we get our fair share of the three million new apprenticeships promised by the government by 2020," added Mr Marner. "I look forward to welcoming you all to this very important event on November 4."

The conference will finish with lunch and is available free to B&ES members.

For more information go to: **[www.b-esskillsconference.org](http://www.b-esskillsconference.org)**

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Notes to Editors:

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