



INTERACT
INFORM
INFLUENCE

January 2025

UK workforce needed to deliver clean, secure energy

Consultation response from The Housing Forum

Response submitted by:

Anna Clarke, Director of Policy and Public Affairs

On behalf of [The Housing Forum](#), 1 Minster Court, Mincing Lane, London EC3R 7AA

anna.clarke@housingforum.org.uk or info@housingforum.org.uk. 07442 405513.

info@
housingforum.org.uk

About The Housing Forum

The Housing Forum is the UK's cross-sector, industry-wide organisation that represents the entire housing supply chain. Our growing membership drawn from over 150 organisations across the public and private sectors and includes local authorities, housing associations, housebuilders, architects and manufacturers. All share our determination to drive quality in the design, construction and decarbonisation of UK homes. They have a commitment to partnership working and share in our vision of 'A Quality Home for All'.

In order to achieve this, we have advocate for policy change needed for everyone to live in a good quality, sustainable and affordable home. Our key [Housing Solutions](#) set out how we think this can be achieved.

The Housing Forum Ltd
6 Floor, 1 Minster Court
Mincing Lane
London EC3R 7AA

Registered Company
Number 03785174

Response to questions

1. Does the Government have an appropriate understanding of the skill needs to deliver the Clean Energy Mission by 2030 as well as decarbonise homes and businesses?

The Housing Forum believes that a cross-departmental approach is needed to ensure that the skills needed to deliver the Government's Clean Energy Mission by 2030 are in place. The Government rightly recognises that past efforts to move housing towards cleaner or reduced energy usage have failed to work as intended, especially those involving homeowners.

It has been acknowledged by many, including the Construction Leadership Council's [Roadmap for Skills for Net Zero](#) that there is a skills gap in retrofitting. We understand that the London Homes Coalition is also working on the 'Building Skills for the Future' project, which involves compiling data on their investment plans to identify areas of greatest demand and gain a clearer understanding of workforce needs.

2. To what extent can the Clean Energy Mission and the retrofitting of homes and businesses be carried out by the existing workforce, and to what extent will it require new entrants to the workforce?

We do not have sufficient skilled workers to deliver the Clean Energy Mission in terms of building new homes that are zero-carbon ready and retrofitting existing homes, with particularly acute shortages around heat pump engineers, building safety experts and planners. The shortage creates inflationary pressure as wage demands push up prices. Skill shortages in construction are nothing new and under-investment has plagued the sector for several decades.

3. How might the Government ensure that the job market in clean energy roles is sustainable enough to incentivise private sector investment in training for 2030 and beyond?

There are reforms that industry would like to see:

Investment in education and training

- **Increased investment** is needed in training and developing the workforce. FE Colleges must create training facilities and training that meets with the skills requirements of employers and the sector.
- Staff in FE colleges and universities need to undertake **continued professional development** to ensure that they are up to speed with the current practice around construction – it is a fast-changing area current especially with all the changes around building-safety and the golden thread that have come in.
- Government should make dramatic **improvements to careers guidance** in schools to help teenagers make informed decisions about the later stages of their education, and much better knowledge of the types of job opportunities that are out there. Work experience, part-time jobs, internships and visits to local employers can all help.

INTERACT
INFORM
INFLUENCE

info@
housingforum.org.uk

The Housing Forum Ltd
6 Floor, 1 Minster Court
Mincing Lane
London EC3R 7AA

Registered Company
Number 03785174

- There needs to be clear **pathways for young people from school** into the many different careers in construction, which includes both building new homes and maintaining and upgrading the existing stock. The [London Homes Coalition](#) has done some good work on this area.
- The Government should not overlook the need of **mid-career switchers** – who have potential to expand their skillset into growing areas, such as green technology. This requires more flexible approaches to retraining and funding to support those who want to (re)train later in life. It will also help improve diversity in the sector by bringing in talented people who may not have thought about a career in construction when they were younger.
- The Government should maintain its focus on **people outside of the workforce for health reasons** and seek to ensure that those with skills in construction are recover their health where possible, and find alternative job roles where their health prevents a return to their original role (eg for physical roles).
- As well as green skills, companies also need a range of specialist skills to deliver clean, secure energy. For example:
 - District heating
 - Legal services: For example, one legal firm we work with has established a dedicated team specialising in energy-related matters.
 - Data collection and analysis: Companies that leverage data intelligence to establish baselines, validate methods, and evaluate performance post implementation will play a crucial role in driving progress.
 - Scaffolding
 - Plumbers

info@
housingforum.org.uk

Much of this training will take time, so Government should **not rule out immigration** to fill some of the more urgent needs in the short to medium term. There may also be ways to better use or **skill-up existing migrants** with the areas such as construction sector where there are skills shortages, particularly migrants who come other than for a specific job (such as refugees or those joining family in the UK).

Supporting industry

DESNI should **support industry** to expand, upskill and diversify the housebuilding workforce. There are several examples of initiatives that The Housing Forum is aware of:

- The Housing Forum's Futures Network has produced three podcasts and resources aimed at [young people](#), [career changers](#), and [employers](#). They also made a short [sizzle video](#) aimed at attracting people into the sector.
- Skills Hubs and on-site facilities to train people have been set up – for instance the [NHBC Hubs](#) and by [Vistry Skills Academy](#).
- Sheffield City Council have worked closely with housing maintenance teams to train 20 existing members of staff in fitting solar PV and heat pumps. They

The Housing Forum Ltd
6 Floor, 1 Minster Court
Mincing Lane
London EC3R 7AA

are developing insulation courses through Sheffield College and also attending careers events.

- The [Sustainability Skills School](#) provides a wide range of programs, and individuals involved in public procurement should be encouraged to join and actively participate.
- Energy Trust and Retrofit Academy have developed [courses for PAS2030](#), a mandatory qualification for professionals undertaking retrofit projects funded by public finance. Individuals may need to engage in 'learning on the job' while working toward certification.

INTERACT
INFORM
INFLUENCE

To support these efforts:

- Government can help organisations such as The Housing Forum who have produced **material for use in the education sector** (see above) to get it out to the intended audience.
- The housing sector needs **government to work with them and to facilitate close working with the education sector**, especially at HE establishments which do not enjoy as strong a local links as the FE sector (as graduates are less likely to remain locally).
- Smaller companies would benefit from support to work together to develop training programmes.
- Increased **flexibility over the use of the apprenticeship levy** will be welcome.

info@
housingforum.org.uk

The construction sector is highly adaptable, with many firms working on both newbuild and retrofit. This helps firms to cope with upturns and downturns in the housing market, and we have seen firms increase their retrofitting activities in response to the recent housing market downturn. However, this does mean that if the Government is successful in achieving the step-change in housebuilding needed to achieve 1.5 million new homes, as planned, there will be further pressure put upon the retrofitting sector as firms pivot back towards newbuild. The Government will need to **support additional learning and innovation in areas such as air source heat pumps, MVHR systems, and cladding.**

Cross-departmental work is needed to **modernise the housebuilding system and improve efficiency, and help the sector reduce embodied carbon in construction.** Part of the answer lies in moving more construction into controlled factory environments (**Modern Methods of Construction**). These offer several clear benefits:

- They require less labour, which should help reduce costs and help avoid the shortage of skilled labour holding back the growth in housebuilding.
- They can be set up in the areas with the greatest supply of labour – which tends not to be the areas with the greatest need for new housing, bringing down costs and providing jobs where they are most needed.
- They provide a safer, warmer working environment and are better able to accommodate a variety of working patterns (including part-time work) and

The Housing Forum Ltd
6 Floor, 1 Minster Court
Mincing Lane
London EC3R 7AA

are therefore more appealing to a broader range of potential employees, improving diversity.

- They are better able to ensure consistent quality of output via precision manufacturing and via new technologies including those that reduce the carbon usage in construction.

Government should work with the sector to create a more reliable market for low-carbon housing, including the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to futureproof the housebuilding industry.

The government's shift towards **devolution** should boost economic growth by empowering elected mayors with greater decision-making to shape their regions through Local Growth Plans. These plans **should include a robust retrofit strategy and align with existing enterprise partnerships.**

4. How can the new Office for Clean Energy jobs contribute to workforce planning in the energy sector?

We are not sufficiently clear on the remit of the Office for Clean Energy Jobs to be able to answer this question.

5. What more can the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero do to ensure the workforce is in place to deliver the Clean Energy Mission and accelerate the retrofitting of homes and businesses?

DESNZ should work closely with other government departments to ensure that all funding streams, such as the Warm Homes Grants, are in place for the **long-term and that the timetables** for submitting funding applications and for spending the funds are long-term. This allows funding recipients (such as housing associations and councils) to procure in a cost-effective manner, and allows the contractors time to ensure that they can recruit and train the workforce that is needed.

Clarity on future policy is needed:

- a) The lack of clarity over the **future of hydrogen** as a direct replacement for gas in home heating continues to hold the sector back and prevents investment and training in areas that will be required to deliver the Clean Energy Mission.
- b) The Government's reluctance to commit to a **date when gas boilers may no longer be fitted** in existing homes and businesses creates uncertainty and deters investment in the businesses and jobs necessary to move away from gas.

INTERACT
INFORM
INFLUENCE

info@
housingforum.org.uk

The Housing Forum Ltd
6 Floor, 1 Minster Court
Mincing Lane
London EC3R 7AA

Registered Company
Number 03785174