

# Bidders for major UK Government infrastructure projects must provide evidence of commitment to skills development

From 1 April 2015, all bidders for major UK Government infrastructure projects will be required to provide evidence of their commitment to developing workforce skills, as part of the procurement process.

## The skills commitment

Under new plans announced by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, from 1 April 2015, bidders for all major UK Government infrastructure projects will have to demonstrate a "clear commitment to developing the skills of the current and future workforce".

The commitment will ultimately be a contractual obligation, monitored by the UK Government and may also be used to inform future procurement decisions.

## Good company skills

The Construction Leadership Council has been tasked with developing a clear definition of "good company skills".

Although the council is yet to determine the precise scope of the definition, it may well include a commitment to the number of

approved English Apprenticeship Agreements; this regime replaces the current statutory apprenticeship standards when the Deregulation Bill 2015-16 comes into force.

Following a transitional period all new apprenticeships will be based on this new industry focused regime, which will require apprentices to receive training in order to attain certain pre-approved standards in their work.

## Major projects

The skills commitment will apply to contracts for UK Government infrastructure projects with a capital value in excess of £50 million.

Although its scope may have broader application, as procuring authorities will be encouraged to amend the £50 million threshold "where appropriate".

The announcement also expressed hopes to create a wider dialogue on

the skill requirements for UK regulated infrastructure.

## Addressing the infrastructure skills gap

Complex infrastructure projects are clearly dependent on appropriately skilled human capital.

The fact that HS2 Ltd, the entity responsible for developing and promoting the UK's proposed second high speed rail line, has already signed up to the commitment underlines the importance of securing a skilled workforce in order to deliver major infrastructure projects.

The UK Government's intervention in seeking to address the infrastructure skills gap is likely to be welcomed by the industry, albeit the scope of the commitment, and particularly its ability to inform future procurements, will be keenly awaited by sponsors.

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