



# TRADITIONAL BUILDING CRAFT SKILLS

*Reassessing the Need, Addressing the Issues*



**SKILLS NEEDS  
ANALYSIS OF  
THE BUILT  
HERITAGE SECTOR**

## context

The purpose of this report is to review and evaluate the impact of the work of the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) in addressing the skills shortage identified in the first-ever NHTG Skills Needs Analysis research of the built heritage sector, published in 2005. As well as providing up-to-date statistical data for traditional building craft skills in England, the report enables the NHTG to measure and improve the effectiveness of its strategic planning and tactical delivery.

The research objectives were to:

- Develop comprehensive traditional building craft skills research for the built heritage sector.
- Identify current supply and demand of skilled labour in the sector, and identify specific skills shortages by craft occupation.
- Assess the traditional building materials supply chain.
- Reassess current levels of training provision and identify areas of specific training need.
- Review current careers promotion for the sector.
- Assess the level of progress that has been made against the Skills Action Plan in the 2005 report.
- Update the Skills Action Plan and provide recommendations to address and adapt to new issues, and measure the performance within an agreed timetable.
- Identify synergies within the supporting network in terms of resources and opportunities for partnering.

The approach to the research was similar to the previous study, so the new data would be fully comparable with that from the first study. However, since the 2005 report, similar research has been undertaken in Scotland (2007) and Wales (2007), and improvements in methodology from these studies have been incorporated into the approach to this current research.

The research included 646 structured quantitative interviews with:

- 533 contractors
- 58 stockholders
- 30 training providers
- 25 suppliers and manufacturers.

These were supplemented by 68 in-depth qualitative interviews with stakeholder groups, including 26 interviews with trade associations and trade federations, representing both the construction industry in general and various traditional building craft specialisms.

The findings are crucial in providing evidence to meet the requirements of Target 14 in the Funding Agreement between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and English Heritage.



## Main Findings of the Report

	Demand	Skills Supply	Manufacturers and Suppliers	Training Provision
<b>Findings</b>	<p>Around 5m pre-1919 buildings, including 0.5m listed buildings</p> <p>Increased expenditure since 2005 – repair and maintenance output now worth £4.7bn (£3.5bn in 2005), with £1.4bn on traditional building skills; will rise to £1.5bn by 2012</p> <p>Average spending per building rising – large gap between actual and potential demand for traditional building craft skills</p> <p>Amount of grant available declining, especially as a result of increased funding pressures</p> <p>Variable knowledge and understanding among stockholders</p> <p>Perceived lack of necessity for using traditional materials and cost are principal factors preventing more extensive use of traditional materials</p> <p>Small stockholders experience great difficulty finding suitably qualified and/or experienced trades/craftspeople</p> <p>Levels of satisfaction with quality and completion times have declined considerably since the 2005 research</p>	<p>109,000 people employed on pre-1919 buildings in 2007, but only around 33,000 craftspeople actually equipped with the skills to work with traditional building materials</p> <p>16,000 of the traditional building workforce required some form of traditional building skills training and 2,000 needed training in the use of traditional building materials, these figures are set to rise to 16,612 and 2,044 respectively in 2012</p> <p>The vast majority working in this sector are general builders with only 8% of those interviewed describing themselves as conservation or heritage specialists</p> <p>Few contractors have difficulties finding subcontractors</p> <p>Recruitment remains challenging, with some 43% of contractors reporting it to be either fairly or very difficult; however, the situation has eased since 2005, with only 3% of contractors reporting long-term vacancies</p> <p>Most contractors prefer to recruit employees in need of some, but not extensive training</p> <p>Most contractors have high but at times unjustified confidence in their ability to work on traditional buildings</p> <p>Contractors have high confidence in employees' skills and knowledge, but rate skills slightly higher than knowledge</p> <p>Almost one-third of contractors expressed interest in the Heritage Skills National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3</p>	<p>Manufacturers and suppliers in this sector are highly specialised – almost all materials supplied are traditional</p> <p>Predominant materials supplied are lime plaster and mortars</p> <p>Materials often sourced from abroad</p> <p>Most manufacturers and suppliers believe demand for traditional materials has increased in recent years</p> <p>Manufacturers made low estimates of builders' knowledge and skills in using traditional materials – seen as an impediment to wider use of those materials</p> <p>Few manufacturers cited particular skills shortages or gaps, but saw employees' practical skills as superior to their knowledge</p> <p>A considerably larger proportion of manufacturers and suppliers than contractors preferred to recruit employees in need of extensive training</p> <p>Contractors report using far less traditional building materials than stockholders suggest, with lack of necessity cited for not using these more</p>	<p>Significant decline in number of contractors with employees in training, and slight decline in the number of apprentices</p> <p>FE sector remains primary source of training, with wood trades most numerous courses and roofing least</p> <p>Training providers employing more trainers (full- and part-time) than in 2005, and number of trainers per course fairly stable</p> <p>Training providers report only 37% of staff members able to teach traditional skills – confirms anecdotal picture in 2005 report</p> <p>Training providers feel that Training the Trainers programme would appeal to some of their staff but uptake would be difficult</p> <p>Over 50% of training providers lack faith in suitability of current mainstream construction NVQs for work on pre-1919 buildings</p> <p>50% of providers knew of the Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3 and almost 25% were preparing to run heritage/conservation-related courses or modules</p> <p>Enthusiasm for increased construction-related education in primary and secondary schools</p>
<b>Reasons</b>	<p>Culture of spending the least amount possible on repair and maintenance still exists</p> <p>Lack of knowledge among stockholders encourages inappropriate maintenance</p> <p>Strength of new build is discouraging contractors from taking on small jobs for domestic clients</p> <p>Difficulty of finding trades/craftspeople encourages stockholders to use inappropriate contractors</p>	<p>Contractors with only basic construction skills and a lack of understanding of traditional building methods and materials are working on pre-1919 buildings</p> <p>Some builders overestimate their own and employees' knowledge and skills</p> <p>Lack of specialist training and lack of information mean that builders are sometimes unaware of appropriate treatment for pre-1919 buildings</p>	<p>Traditional materials manufacture disrupted in England, and more consistent products available from Europe</p> <p>Some scarce materials only available from foreign sources, or are significantly cheaper because of greater supply abroad</p> <p>Stockholders and builders lack awareness of appropriate materials to use on traditional buildings</p> <p>Specialist firms train employees themselves because of lack of available relevant training</p> <p>Manufacturing workforce less mobile and more likely to stay with employer than construction workforce</p>	<p>Decreased difficulty with recruitment may be discouraging contractors from taking on apprentices</p> <p>Most construction-related NVQ frameworks meet needs of new build, rather than repair and maintenance sector</p> <p>Difficulty of sourcing trainers, materials and tools prevents providers from offering more traditional building skills courses</p> <p>Existing trainers lack time to attend supplementary training, such as Training the Trainers</p> <p>Many training providers perceive a lack of demand for specialist heritage training</p>

# key recommendations

## Demand

- Develop a unified Accredited Heritage Building Contractors Register for use by public and private stockholders, and in particular to provide consumer protection to homeowners when selecting a suitably experienced and competent contractor for pre-1919 building work.
- Provide improved information, advice and guidance on conservation, repair, maintenance and restoration to clients and stockholders by making fuller use of existing information sources.
- Stimulate client demand for the use of appropriate skills and materials for all major built heritage projects.
- Work more closely with local authorities to encourage the use of an appropriate skilled regional and local workforce for pre-1919 buildings, and provide guidance on this to private stockholders within their regions and localities.
- Increase levels of grant support available to historic property owners.
- Promote the CSCS heritage skills card as evidence of competence for this sector of the construction industry.
- Respond to fiscal policy to represent and lobby for a level playing-field in respect of the built heritage sector to stimulate client demand for skills and training.
- Encourage market acceptance of routine care and maintenance of pre-1919 buildings.

## Skills Supply

- Developing a sector-wide Works & Training Contract framework for pre-1919 buildings.
- Increasing awareness of the demand for training and skills development to achieve a fully qualified, competent and safety-aware built heritage sector workforce.
- Making best use of current and future funding streams to assist contractors and craftspeople investing in and benefiting from training schemes.
- Promoting and developing career progression routes within the built heritage sector.
- Maintaining exchange of ideas on training and skills development with key stakeholders in the UK, Republic of Ireland and Europe.
- Continuing to promote careers information on traditional building craft trades within the school education system.

## Manufacturers and Suppliers

- Continue mapping and make available sources of traditional materials, particularly building stone.
- Promote awareness of traditional methods and materials among stakeholders
- Increase knowledge base available to builders and stockholders to improve demand
- Extend on-site assessment and training to manufacturers so that on-the-job learning is properly recognised.
- Improving integration of training of manufacturers and suppliers of traditional building with traditional building skills training.
- Increase awareness in planning authorities of the need to specify where possible traditional materials from England to stimulate demand for indigenous materials for local and regional use, and to reduce the carbon footprint of the material supply-chain.

## Training Provision

- Increasing demand for traditional building skills courses and training opportunities for contractors and craftspeople.
- Continuing to develop a framework and process for delivering flexible training and skills provision.
- Increasing the uptake of traditional building skills training within the FE college system.
- Promote apprenticeships and ensure incentives are in place for employers to take on new apprentices.
- Promote awareness of the Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3, particularly among employers and potential trainees.
- Ensure that support is available for colleges and trainers for the Training the Trainers programme.
- Responding to contractors' preference for on-site, practical training.
- Developing an Advanced Construction Award (ACA) in Heritage Skills, enabling colleges to deliver a progression award linked to the new Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3.
- Ensuring coordinated regional training delivery to provide regional solutions to regional demand by maximising the existing training infrastructure or developing new training where none exists.
- Rethinking aspects of traditional building skills training and education to where possible share learning opportunities between craftspeople and building professionals.

## Progress Made Against the 2005 Skills Action Plan

### Strategic Policy

- National links have been maintained and UK-wide policies developed on built heritage sector procurement, qualifications, training provision and skills development.
- The establishment of an integrated regional Heritage Skills Network has been supported and coordinated across the nine English regions.

### Communications and Marketing

- The NHTG website and dedicated phone line have been established as central sources of information, advice and guidance on training, careers and skills development in this sector. The website is currently being revamped to improve information sources and navigation.
- There are 2,000 copies in circulation of the *NHTG Starting to Make a Difference in the Built Heritage Sector* information leaflet, and the NHTG electronic *Newsletter* has over 1,000 subscribers.
- The ConstructionSkills Communications and Marketing Press Office generated considerable press coverage in 2007 alone, resulting in a large increase in the number of visitors to the NHTG website from feature items.
- *The NHTG Careers in Conservation and Restoration* careers advice brochure was re-branded in January 2007, with over 7,000 copies circulated to schools, colleges and other interested parties.

### Demand for Skills

- Work with English Heritage is being continued to establish a Works and Training Contract Framework that can be used across the built heritage sector.
- An NHTG Heritage Building Contractors Register Working Group has been set up to develop a unified accredited register for the sector and provide consumer confidence in selecting suitable contractors or craftspeople for pre-1919 building works.
- Relations have been established with the Institute for Historic Building Conservation to provide better information, advice and guidance to local authority staff and property owners.
- A Skills Charter is being developed for use by local authorities in their procurement processes to ensure the use of skilled contractors and craftspeople and training within contracts.
- Work is being carried out with the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) to ensure that clients seeking evidence of competence and safety-awareness in this sector insist on the CSCS heritage skills card, with the NHTG acting as the advisory panel.

- HLF-funded Townscape Heritage Initiatives have been assisted to develop their training plans.

### Supply of Skills

- Employers and craftspeople have been advised on training needs and training plans.
- Liaison with relevant organisations has promoted conservation training and best practice.
- Help has been provided to develop training courses, taster days and so on for contractors, building professionals and historic property owners.
- Client demand has been stimulated to use suitably skilled and competent contractors and craftspeople on pre-1919 building contracts.
- A Mentoring Scheme has been developed to allow experienced craftspeople to pass on their knowledge to less-experienced practitioners.

### Qualifications

The following have been developed:

- The new Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3.
- A Heritage Apprenticeship Programme.
- The Senior Craftsperson Scheme.

### Education and Training

- The NHTG has been established as the voice on traditional building skills training and development, with a central umbrella role to represent built heritage craft skills interests.
- A National Heritage Training Academy framework is being developed for the coordinated delivery of training and skills development to meet regional demand.
- Work has taken place with a wide range of colleges to develop heritage skills training courses.
- A range of information, guidance and careers advice has been provided.
- UK-wide heritage skills events have been organised, supported and participated in.
- Partnership working has taken place on educational initiatives to raise awareness of the built heritage sector.
- Numerous National Construction Week and schools events have been participated in to promote careers in this sector.
- An NHTG Training the Trainers programme has been developed for FE college trainers to improve their knowledge and skills of conservation, repair, maintenance and restoration, with related DVD and text-based teaching support materials.
- The NHTG is an active partner in delivering the Traditional Building Skills Bursary Scheme for England and Wales.

## key issues

While a large amount has been achieved since the 2005 NHTG report in England to promote the needs of the sector and support for traditional building skills training across the nine English regions improved, a great deal still needs to be done to maintain this progress.

The most notable changes since 2005 are the slight increase in the projected numbers employed in the pre-1919 building sector and evidence that absolute skills shortages are probably less of a problem than skills gaps. The latter is due to better recruitment practices; more effective careers and qualifications marketing; fairly good staff retention rates within the sector and the suggestion that those leaving are more than compensated by those joining; employers being more discerning in the recruitment process; and increased immigration of mainly skilled labour from the eastern nations of the EU over the past two years. However, there is evidence that significant skills gaps exist, whereby although many workers have the basic craft skills needed to undertake work on traditional buildings, many require upskilling and only around one-third of the workforce

use traditional building materials. This affects how pre-1919 buildings are repaired and maintained and reflects the need for increased training and skills development.

Although the exact breakdown between different types of training required across the sector is less clear, it is encouraging that almost one-third of contractors expressed an interest in the new Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3. This is one of the current means to achieve a CSCS card, which will be required to work on historic buildings in the future.

The findings of this research highlight the continued need for a coordinated approach to increase demand for and supply of traditional building skills and training and development. Further Education college construction courses are driven by new build. The work of ConstructionSkills and NHTG since late 2005 on developing the infrastructure for traditional building skills to redress this balance is only now making a difference. This needs to be taken into account in responding to the training and upskilling needs within this sector required to fill the skills gaps.

The following are the main themes and actions which underpin the Skills Action Plan (see Section 10).

### Key Themes

- An **active market** is needed to persuade contractors, trainees and training providers of the worth of investing time and effort in developing the skills and knowledge needed to work on traditional buildings, and the understanding of traditional building methods and materials. The development of Works and Training Contracts, the Skills Charter and the CSCS requirement for proof of competence will all contribute to this aspect.
- There is a real need for a collective response to the demand for increased knowledge and understanding of the needs of pre-1919 buildings. Without appropriate information, advice and guidance and education for private stockholders, there will be no way of transforming the **enormous latent demand** for traditional building skills into an active market.
- Similar but more specialised information needs to be provided to inform contractors of appropriate procedures to follow, with **standards of best practice developed** and widely disseminated.
- Increased demand for traditional building craft skills will support **increased supply and training**.
- It is necessary to encourage training providers to **increase the content and level of traditional building skills**

**teaching on their construction courses**, and to differentiate between traditional and modern building techniques so construction training for this sector is truly fit for purpose.

- There is an urgent need to develop an **Advanced Construction Award (ACA)** in Heritage Skills, to enable colleges to deliver a progression award linked to the new Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3.
- Greater awareness is required of the need for traditional skills and the benefits of training and experience in these skills, including **appropriate training for generalists as well as higher level opportunities** for those who wish to specialise in this very significant area.

### Key Actions

The lead partners in this field need to continue to develop partnership working to ensure that the following key actions are implemented to sustain the excellent work since 2005 in addressing training and skills development for the built heritage sector.

### Strategic Vision

NHTG, ConstructionSkills and English Heritage: through the Sector Skills Agreement and the Regional Heritage Skills Action Groups continue to coordinate action and partnership involvement to tackle the

issues involved in this report, and work to further improve cooperation between stakeholders and coherence in their approaches.

### Supply and Demand

**NHTG:** improve information available to stockholders and help bridge the gap between the latent and actual demand for traditional building skills and materials, and instil a culture of care and maintenance.

**NHTG, English Heritage and Professional Bodies:** coordinate the activities of major stakeholders to produce authoritative information, advice and guidance on appropriate conservation, repair, maintenance and restoration of pre-1919 buildings, with special attention to finding appropriate ways of meeting sustainability needs..

**NHTG and Trade Federations:** continue to develop a unified Accredited Heritage Building Contractors Register of appropriately qualified and experienced heritage building contractors and craftspeople for pre-1919 buildings.

### Training and Skills Development

**ConstructionSkills, NHTG and English Heritage:** continue to improve the image of the sector, to ensure

that training providers, contractors and recruits are fully informed of the new Heritage Skills NVQ Level 3, and are aware that this provides an appropriate qualification path for work on pre-1919 building and is linked to the CSCS heritage skills card for this sector of the construction industry.

**ConstructionSkills and NHTG:** improve support for career changers interested in pursuing craft skills careers and on upskilling existing members of the construction industry working on pre-1919 buildings.

**ConstructionSkills, NHTG and English Heritage:** continue working to secure long-term funding opportunities for skills training and development of the built heritage workforce.

**ConstructionSkills and NHTG:** work with FE colleges and training providers to promote the need and growing demand for traditional building craft skills, and the latent demand for the training provision needed to meet this demand.

**ConstructionSkills and NHTG:** ensure that some consideration of the repair and maintenance needs of traditional buildings is included in all basic construction courses and qualifications.



© The National Trust/Ray Stevens

NHTG would like to acknowledge its gratitude to the Sector Skills Development Agency, English Heritage and ConstructionSkills for funding the research and production of the main report and summary document; PDF versions of both reports can be downloaded from the following websites:

[www.nhtg.org.uk](http://www.nhtg.org.uk)

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

[www.constructionskills.net/research](http://www.constructionskills.net/research)



ENGLISH HERITAGE



The National Heritage Training Group  
Carthusian Court  
12 Carthusian Street  
London  
EC1M 6EZ

e-mail: [info@nhtg.org.uk](mailto:info@nhtg.org.uk)  
[www.nhtg.org.uk](http://www.nhtg.org.uk)

ConstructionSkills is part of the Skills for Business  
Network of 25 employer-led Sector Skills Councils



Designed by:  
Intuitive Design  
Tel: 01621 868 698  
[www.intuitive-design.co.uk](http://www.intuitive-design.co.uk)