



Call for Evidence: Strategy for the built environment professions, trades and occupations

August 2026

This response is made by Unite the union, the UK's strongest trade union, representing over one million members across all sectors of the economy including construction, energy and utilities, engineering, manufacturing, financial services, transport, food and agriculture, information technology, service industries, hospitality, health, local government and the not-for-profit sector.

Unite the union welcomes this call for evidence for a strategy for the built environment professions, trades and occupations, where our members work throughout the total building lifecycle of pre-design; design and specification; construction; occupation, repair and maintenance (including small scale works and alterations, through to major projects).

Unite believes that this exercise represents a significant opportunity and catalyst for positive reform and structural change to enhance building safety, fire safety in buildings, client, public and consumer protection across buildings, structures and the broader built environment.

Focus is required at the individual competence and organisational competence levels, and the broader ecosystem that supports that, all of which are inextricably linked, encompassing the total construction and the built environment process, inclusive of domestic, residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure, new build, heritage, retrofit (and associated remediation), and general ongoing repair and maintenance.

Unite the union represents tens of thousands of construction workers, mainly tradespersons, craftspeople, general operatives, and plant operatives, as well as building professionals and supervision, and those workers involved in the manufacture of construction products and materials necessary to maintain building processes.

Unite's key priorities in this call for evidence include:

- The pressing need for the proposed introduction through primary legislation for a single status of worker.
- Public, government and infrastructure procurement should mandate and embed the requirements for organisational and individual competence into projects and contracts (inclusive of all building work and related temporary works).
- Procurement should also embed adherence to collective bargaining agreements recognised in the industry, which have defined skills requirements embedded within them.
- Competence frameworks create a tangible reference point of qualitative criteria for the enforcement of competence requirements already in UK law. Government and industry should now move to the implementation phase of said frameworks.
- It is apparent that regarding competence in construction, the longstanding UK regulatory approach of goal setting and voluntarism is not sufficient on its own. A more prescriptive level of regulatory intervention and compliance, building upon partnerships between government, BSR/ICC and representative bona fide industry stakeholders is now required to augment that. This approach would pragmatically recognise and strengthen proven existing systems that work well and raise/set the bar where they do not.
- Unite maintains that corresponding organisational licensing/registration of companies as technically competent and reputable in their areas of work would form part of an overarching holistic approach.
- Unite advocates that mandatory systems of licence to practise and registration, referencing adherence to ICSG SLG frameworks (encompassing the relevant CSCS Alliance card scheme to the job, fire safety in buildings training, CPD, etc.), be put in place for specified trades, professions and occupations, particularly those deemed higher-risk and safety critical.
- Complementing the above point, that "protection of title" be put in place for such specified trades, professions and occupations, to deter the unqualified from adopting occupational titles that they have neither earned nor qualified to industry standards for.
- Unite explicitly opposes the development of any commercialised system where workers are forced to self-fund expensive and onerous periodic revalidations / reassessments to maintain their livelihoods and imposition of 'job taxes'. Any system must be meaningful, industry governed, fair and proportionate, with accessibility to skills investment funding and grants for workers and employers who require assistance.

To assist MHCLG in processing this submission, the table overleaf maps the six core themes of the Call for Evidence directly to the narrative evidence provided in the following response.

Call for evidence theme	Evidence and policy coverage in this submission
1. Skills, knowledge, experience and capability <i>(Individual and organisational competence, retention & recruitment capabilities)</i>	ICSG SLG frameworks, CSCS Alliance card schemes, industry recognised apprenticeships, N/SVQs, experienced worker routes, EBSSA/Scottish installer matrices, competence in Temporary Works, and example of SQEP (Suitably Qualified and Experienced Personnel) status.
2. Drivers of behaviours, conduct and culture <i>(Operating models, commercial incentives, insurance, and setting the standards and expectations for compliance across a project)</i>	Procurement levers, BSR whistleblowing access for workers, addressing precarious employment (CIS/Umbrella schemes vs. direct employment), and confronting the "race to the bottom" (Hackitt Review).
3. Accountability and personal responsibility <i>(Understanding and application by individual and corporate actors across the building lifecycle)</i>	Dutyholder roles under the Building Safety Act, statutory protection of title, client/contractor responsibilities, single status of worker, and dual-level licensing (individual and company).
4. System infrastructure for education, training, regulation and oversight <i>(Incentivising and enabling appropriate ways of working)</i>	Roles of the BSR/Single Construction Regulator, assuring competence of assessors/inspectors, eliminating commercial 'job tax' training rackets, and ensuring four-nation skills mobility across the UK.
5. Critical interdependencies across the building lifecycle <i>(Role interaction, downstream impacts of choices made at earlier stages)</i>	Early engagement of competent specialist trade contractors, pre-design/design stage procurement rules, BS 8670-1 & 2 application, and ensuring design integrity is not undermined during construction/maintenance and retrofit/remediation works.
6. Practical actions for reform and main barriers to success <i>(Actions, systemic barriers, and policy recommendations)</i>	Mandating competence in public procurement, enforcing national collective bargaining agreements, domestic builder licensing (FMB example), mandatory registration, and centralised public portals.

In terms of the individual competence and organisational capability, whilst it is generally accepted that everyone “should” have the identifiable level of competence required to undertake the work at hand throughout the construction process and building lifecycle, this is currently not the case, and a more robust system of assurance is required.

Moreover, both organisations and individuals should understand and be conscious of the limitations of their competence and where their expertise and skills begin and end. Furthermore, individuals on site must not exceed the limitations of their level of skills, qualifications and competence, as continues to be the case on many projects. The holding of the appropriate competence assurance, and accompanying apprenticeship or equivalent recognised training, qualifications, N/SVQ, card and certifications etc. as set down in the relevant industry recognised framework pertinent to their role should dictate the extent of the work they can and cannot undertake, and the same goes for company certification as entities.

Systems can fail due to a lack of appropriate interaction between various stakeholders across the lifecycle of a building, poor teamwork and poor interconnected organisation. This is whilst the competence of professionals, tradespeople and others involved may not be in doubt at an individual level. Therefore, any new system needs to have embedded within it an overarching common set of competence principles, to facilitate an approach to successful coordination and interfacing between all relevant parties for the delivery and ongoing maintenance of a safe building during its total lifecycle. The level of appreciation required will be dependent on role, from rudimentary to advanced. Therefore, it is imperative that those whose role is to coordinate are themselves subject to robust competency criteria appropriate to their position.

Considering the above, householders and small business clients procuring building work cannot be expected to totally understand or navigate the complexities of the system. Therefore, they need clear, proportionate and contextualised guidance and signposting so that they can make the right decisions (e.g. a centralised authoritative government portal signposting them to bona fide registered contractors and professionals etc.).

Unite welcomes the approach of the call for evidence in encompassing the total building lifecycle and the different risks that timespan can include. Some of the most severe repercussions of poor building work can occur post design and construction phases where buildings are occupied and in use through inadequate delivery of retrofit, associated remediation works, and general long-term repair and maintenance.

In medium to large construction and infrastructure projects and workplaces, all operatives will generally be required to have a certification scheme card that identifies their level of skill, a key component of any competency management system establishing baseline competence and skills, indicating their ability (and limitations) regarding the work they are tasked with carrying out in the construction process.

In the private sector the nature of the contracting chain can impact on behaviours and decision making. For example, when several specialist trades and contractors are engaged there is scope for more bogus ‘self-employment’, with operatives engaged through precarious employment routes such as the Construction Industry Scheme, payroll companies and Umbrella Companies, which can lead to a disconnect across sub-contracting companies.

Where trade unions are engaged in the organisation of a project, for example on major infrastructure projects such as Hinkley Point C, through to union organised DLOs at local authorities, there is in place a structure which allows certainty and a level of management organisation around behaviours, encompassing health and safety, skills and employment.

Effective, safe and quality delivery of works on buildings and structures within the whole of construction and the built environment, including but not limited to Higher Risk Buildings (HRBs), inclusive of new build, retrofit, repair and maintenance, enshrining quality, best practice, best standards, and building safety requires a holistic overview and overhaul of the total UK construction process.

The concepts of competence and a skilled qualified workforce are inextricably linked to the need for robust procurement measures. These measures must stipulate meaningful investment in skills, competency accreditation, long term systematic training inclusive of industry approved apprenticeships, leading to protected occupational recognition; fair work through collectively bargained fair pay, terms, conditions and benefits through the utilisation of the national collective agreements (which specify and embed skills, qualifications and training within them, which in turn correlate to the agreed terms and conditions of employment) between the relevant employers' trade associations and trade unions; direct employment, with the eradication of bogus self-employment/false employment models and sham arrangements. Unite therefore emphasises the pressing need for the proposed introduction through primary legislation for a single status of worker (whilst identifying and recognising genuinely self-employed persons (e.g. sole traders)).

Considering the above, effective robust procurement and enforcements are key. Public, government and infrastructure procurement should lead by example, mandating and embedding the requirements for organisational and individual competence into projects and contracts from the outset, and moving forward then throughout the whole building lifecycle. This is most easily achieved through adherence to the sector-specific competence frameworks and the collective bargaining agreements recognised in the industry.

Factors that would most likely influence stages of the building lifecycle would include but not be constrained to:

- The skills and competence of the persons engaged to carry out works throughout the whole lifecycle of a building, from concept and pre-design through to construction, repair and maintenance, and ultimately demolition/decommissioning, supported by the golden thread of information.
- The organisational capability and ethics of clients, contractors and companies and their appointed agents to ensure that relevant levels of competence are a key requirement for the people and companies involved, regulations are being adhered to, and that the correct, accredited safe materials and components are being utilised to complete the building process and ongoing maintenance thereafter.
- Considering clients, those who finance, insure and manage risks in the built environment have a significant role to play in the embedding of a compliance culture.

- The contracting nature of the project, trade union organised sites for example are known to be safer.
- Where subcontract chains are disconnected through precarious employment relationships there is the potential for disorganisation and cutting corners.
- Additionally, precarious work often means payment for work done and working at haste to complete tasks (compounding the “*race to the bottom*” identified in “*Building a Safer Future*”). This introduces avoidable risk, negatively impacting building safety, fire safety, and quality throughout the long-term building lifecycle.
- Meaningful access to easily accessible whistleblowing mechanisms for all involved to the BSR, from e.g. designers through to workers and residents would assist in generating the culture of compliance required.
- Any system needs to be proportionate, with underlying common principles, but contextualised and appropriate for the work in question (e.g. a small builder compared to a tier 1 contractor).
- A fair, robust, objective and meaningful system of monitoring, enforcement and penalties.

The construction, building and built environment industries currently encompass a polarised structure, whereby at one end of the scale sit professional, quality best standards and best practice delivered by responsible clients, contractors, training providers and workers, and at the other, those ignorant or indifferent to their responsibilities, non-compliant rogue traders, indifferent or irresponsible clients, slum landlords, rogue trainers exacerbating incompetence by seeking to cheat individuals and companies with substandard training, and the utilisation of unqualified and under-qualified labour, much of which fall within the grey economy. Poor building safety, quality and standards can lead to everything from consumers being ripped off at the domestic dwelling/residential building level, right through to catastrophic consequences as witnessed with the Grenfell Tower disaster and tragedy.

MHCLG will be fully aware that following that devastating tragedy, Dame Judith Hackitt undertook an independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety on behalf of HM Government.

Subsequently, Dame Judith’s *Building a Safer Future* interim and final reports, published in 2017 and 2018 respectively, identified systemic cultural and regulatory failures within construction and the built environment leading up to the disaster, driven by what her damning verdict identified as a culture of “*ignorance*”, “*indifference*”, “*lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities*”, and “*inadequate regulatory oversight and enforcement tools*”, leading to a “*race to the bottom*” within the construction sector. (Dame Judith Hackitt, *Building a Safer Future*, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report, May 2018).

The subsequent “*Raising the Bar*” and “*Setting the Bar*” reports emanating from Dame Judith’s review then made several recommendations, not least regarding the establishment of an overarching competence framework across the professions, trades and occupations. Paragraph 698 of the conclusion to *Setting the Bar* states: “*....in those sectors in which third party assessment is carried out at the organisation level (i.e. companies rather than / or as well as individuals are third party assessed), the requirements for organisations will need to set out clearly how the competence of the individuals carrying out the work is assessed and how they are managed and supervised.*”.

Regarding for instance the Installer trades, key recommendations 243 and 244 are replicated here for ease of reference as a key example:

“243. Recommendation: *The industry should adopt a framework for all the installer sectors working on in-scope buildings that can be applied to other project types. The framework will consist of:*

- *Accredited third party certification of companies*
- *Level 2 or 3 qualifications for individuals*
- *A card scheme such as, but not limited to, the CSCS*
- *CPD refresher training and the maintenance of individual skills*
- *All installers have a core knowledge of fire safety in buildings – training to be standardised and made mandatory.”*

“244. Recommendation: *Where installer sectors do not currently operate within the above, these will need to be defined and developed.”.*

Concerning adhering to competence requirements, the development of competence frameworks creates a tangible reference point for the enforcement of competence requirements already in UK law and guidance, including:

- The Building Safety Act 2022 mandates that anyone appointed to work on any building must have the appropriate Skills, Knowledge, Experience, and Behaviours (SKEB) to ensure safety and compliance.
- Part 2A Building Regulations 2010 / The Building Regulations etc. (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2023. (Statutory Instrument 2023 No. 911), Competence: general requirement, 11F requires the competence of people working on buildings in general, inclusive of domestic, residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure premises, including but being not limited to HRBs (Higher-Risk Buildings), inclusive of HRRBs (High-Rise Residential Buildings).
- CDM (Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015).
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 – Regulation 16 – *“persons to be competent to prevent danger and injury”*.
- Work at Height Regulations 2005 – Regulation 5 – Competence
- BS 5975 Code of practice for temporary works procedures, mandating organisational frameworks and designated roles to ensure individual competence.
- HSE Guidance on Human Factors – Training and competence.
- Beyond the above primary reference points, statutory requirements for individual competence are further reinforced across specialised, high-risk operational activities via regulations such as PUWER (Regulation 9), LOLER (Regulation 8), the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997, and the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

Evolving from Setting the Bar and its Working Groups WG0-WG12, “BS 8670-1:2024 – Competence frameworks for building safety - Core criteria. Code of practice” was developed

and published by the BSI (British Standards Institution) for “...*core competence criteria covering the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours required to work on buildings of all types and scales. The goal is to help raise levels of individual professional competence across the built environment in support of the new Building Safety regime*”. BS 8670-1 is the first of the planned BS 8670 suite of standards, with also importantly, in development and complementing this: “*BS 8670-2 Built environment. Core criteria for construction product competence. Code of Practice*”.

In tandem with BS 8670, the large-scale development of sector-specific competence frameworks is significantly underway, with several frameworks already completed, and others in advanced stages of development.

These frameworks have been developed with the participation from representative industry stakeholders, including technical bodies, sector skills bodies, skills partnerships, CITB, employers’ trade associations, and trade unions, whether through participating in the development of competency frameworks through relevant SLGs (Sector Led Groups), established under the ICSG (Industry Competence Steering Group) (The ICSG sits under the BSR’s (Building Safety Regulator) ICC (Industry Competence Committee), the ICC established under section 10 of the Building Safety Act 2022), and/or importantly through participation in closely related industry subject matter expert recognised bodies, such as the SROs (Sector Representative Organisations) and SSBs (Standards Setting Bodies) in the relevant areas of industry for corresponding professions, trades and occupations, aligned for instance to the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) Alliance of card schemes. It is also the intention moving forward that such frameworks will be reviewed periodically to remain current to evolving regulatory and safety standards and new technologies etc.

It is apparent that regarding competence across construction and the built environment, the traditional UK approach of a goal-setting regime, self-regulation, and endeavouring to mitigate risks to levels “as low as reasonably practicable” (ALARP) are not sufficient alone.

A more prescriptive level of regulatory intervention, building upon partnership between government, BSR/ICC and representative bona fide industry stakeholders is now required to strengthen and augment the regime. This will give industry, clients, contractors/employers, workers, residents, building occupants and users a clear reference point when it comes to establishing the requirements and parameters of occupational competence for a given profession, occupation or trade. Government and industry should now move to the implementation phase of said frameworks.

The baseline for this in England and Wales would be government mandating the ICSG (Industry Competence Steering Group) SLG structure (Sector Led Groups), under the BSR’s (Building Safety Regulator) ICC (Industry Competence Committee), as this incorporates for instance for the craft trades, sector-specific competence frameworks developed (or in the development phase) to BS 8670-1, including where applicable across the onsite construction, repair, maintenance and professions, trades and occupations. This includes holding the correct and relevant CSCS Alliance partner card schemes’ card for the job (those standards overseen by the relevant SROs (Sector Representative Organisations) and SSBs (Standard Setting Bodies), with industry defined CPD etc. moving forward. Likewise, companies should comply with the SLG frameworks, building regulations, and where applicable (e.g. electrical, plumbing etc.) operate to the relevant organisational MTCs (Mandatory Technical Competence) criteria.

Furthermore, inextricably linked to and complementing that, Unite believes that the corresponding organisational licensing/registration of companies as technically competent and reputable in their areas of work would form part of an overarching holistic approach.

The types of works that can substantially impact the building safety and fire safety of any building or structure throughout its whole lifecycle, and introduce substantial risk if not carried out correctly, from planning, design to construction and ongoing occupation, repair, maintenance and upgrading/retrofitting, include but are not limited to:

- Structural work, building work, and fire safety.
- Electrical (risk of fire, electric shock, electrocution, interface with renewable/environmental technologies).
- Plumbing and heating (safe potable water, sanitation, high-temperature water safety and prevention of scalding risks, interface with gas, electricity and renewable/environmental technologies).
- Scaffolding (working at height, safe and technically precise temporary structures for safe access, egress and protection).

Unite also maintains that competence in temporary works out of scope of the Building Safety Act (e.g. scaffolding, falsework, formwork etc.) should also be subject to any new regime for the professions, trades and occupations, encompassing the relevant UK law, guidance and corresponding sector specific competence frameworks.

In the domestic dwellings sector, Unite notes the recent shift by MHCLG and BSR away from the term ‘competent person schemes’ in favour of ‘self-certification schemes’ regarding the certification of specified works under the building regulations.

The use of ‘competent person’ in this context was an unfortunate legal phrase that understandably caused public confusion. Legally, the term referred to a juridical person (the firm responsible for carrying out the work) rather than a natural person (an individual). While a firm can be a single-person entity, it is not for example an employee such as an electrician. Unite has highlighted this misunderstanding ever since the introduction of Part P of the Building Regulations. Consequently, this shift in language is welcomed by Unite and our members.

Moreover, considering occupational terminology and status across all settings, including domestic, commercial and industrial, Unite advocates that “protection of title” be put in place for specified trades, particularly those deemed higher-risk and safety critical, to deter the unqualified from adopting occupational titles that they have neither earned nor qualified to industry standards for. As a key example, SELECT (The Electrical Contractors’ Association of Scotland) leads a campaign in Scotland to protect the title of electrician, of which Unite is a signatory and supporter (<https://select-group.s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/wall-of-support/index.html>), and which has garnered significant cross industry and cross-party support. More details can be found here:

<https://select.org.uk/SELECT/SELECT/Website/About/Regulation/Regulation-Landing-Page.aspx>

Unite is affiliated to several international trade union federations, including the Building Workers International (BWI), European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), and Global Power Trade Unions (GPTU). At this international level, the matters of competence, training and occupational registration and licensing are always topics of shared interest and debate amongst the international trade union members who participate. Occupational and company licensing / registration in construction are standard practice in comparable advanced economies, examples including:

- **Australia** – Regulated at the state and territory level by local consumer protection and building authorities, a system of occupational licensing enforces technical competence for high-risk and structural trades (e.g. electrical, plumbing and building). Occupations deemed high-risk undergo industry recognised training and apprenticeships under the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) system. To legally operate, a contracting company must hold a contractor licence and nominate a principal dutyholder (such as a nominated supervisor or manager) who holds the requisite individual trade qualification or licence. Furthermore, in Australia a significant amount of home improvement and repair work (DIY) is strictly restricted or illegal for homeowners to undertake themselves. For instance, while aesthetic upgrades are fine, electrical and plumbing work cannot legally be performed by unlicensed DIYers.
- **Germany** – Through the Law on the Regulation of Crafts and Trades (Trades and Crafts Code), the regional Chambers of Crafts operate and enforce a system of qualified occupational competence at the vocational level for individuals. This system encapsulates the bulk of the construction and building trades. Furthermore, the main trades, including high-risk trades, require a principal dutyholder (e.g. business owner or technical director) holding a Master Craftsman certificate (or equivalent recognised exemption).
- **USA** – Licensing rules are set at the state, city, or county level. Safety-critical occupations such as electricians, plumbers, and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) installers and technicians require a licence/certification to practise in most jurisdictions, across domestic, commercial, and industrial environments. For a company to legally operate, it must hold a contractor licence and designate a principal dutyholder (e.g. known as a Qualifier or Qualifying Agent) who assumes direct responsibility for the company's technical operations.

(For general and specialist contractors, licensing is specified at the state, city, or county level, with most states having a system in place. While traditional, structural, and finishing craftspeople (e.g., carpenters, bricklayers/masons, painters) are generally not required to hold a specialised craft licence at the domestic/residential level, they must still demonstrate trade competence. Furthermore, if they operate a contracting company meeting certain financial project thresholds (or perform specific high-risk work like asbestos removal), many jurisdictions require some form of licensing or registration. For increased consumer protection in residential dwellings work, some municipalities require a Home Improvement Contractor (HIC) licence, which involves holding relevant insurances and passing a Home Improvement Examination, such as the framework operated by the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection:

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/dca/businesses/license-checklist-home-improvement-contractor.page>)

In England and Wales, there is significant need for intervention and reform to protect homeowners and consumers in the domestic building market. We would therefore take this opportunity to also draw the attention of MHCLG to examples like the “*Licence to Build*” campaign spearheaded by the FMB (Federation of Master Builders):

<https://www.fmb.org.uk/resource/licence-to-build-a-model-for-licensing-domestic-building-companies.html>

A fundamental lack of competence played a key role in defective and botched installation of insulation under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme. This has resulted in costly remedial works borne by government, the public purse, and consumers alike.

Considering the above, value for money by getting the job right first time goes hand in hand with consumer protection, fire safety, and the need for quality installations in for example the drive for net zero and renewables, Unite would therefore also take this opportunity to draw the attention of MHCLG to the engineering services Sector Skills Plan which the union supports, published by EBSSA (The Engineering and Building Services Skills Alliance) in February 2026 (<https://www.ebssa.uk/>), not least in regard to their call for the need to “*Develop a National Installer Skills Matrix: Clarify and rationalise skills requirements for energy efficiency and low carbon technologies*”, itself inspired by the Scottish Installer Skills Matrix already in place: (<https://espscotland.ac.uk/scottish-installer-skills-matrix/>), which when agreed by the parties could be adopted by the likes of public bodies, Great British Energy and clients/consumers as an easily accessible ‘ready reckoner’ for baseline competence for the installation and maintenance of clean energy, clean heat and low carbon technologies (EV, PV, solar thermal, heat pumps etc.) in building services engineering (electrical, plumbing, HVACR).

Construction is a people and skills industry. Post-Grenfell reforms have laid the foundations for higher standards across the built environment for defining dutyholders, and the drive for competence, through to the system of Gateways governing building controls around HRBs, from design and then construction through to use and occupation.

The golden thread of information recommended by Dame Judith Hackitt demands evidence be recorded and collated so that actions and decisions related to a building’s lifecycle can be tangibly evidenced. At the heart of this the industry now has the Building Safety Regulator (and moving forward, a Single Construction Regulator).

It should be remembered that the overall competence system is not just limited to the individual competence of the professions, trades and occupations within the workforce on the one hand, and the organisational competence of companies, contractors and clients on the other. An intrinsic part of any successful competence ecosystem must take account of those bodies responsible for objective oversight and assurance, including regulators and certification bodies. Likewise, the industry’s education and training infrastructure imparts on individuals a significant element of the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours required within a role to make them competent. Therefore, if those who work and deliver in such areas do not possess the requisite level of competence themselves to effectively carry out their role

(e.g. from inspectors through to teachers and assessors), and their organisations do not carry the sufficient level of independence, resource, and technical proficiency within them, the effectiveness of the whole system could then be diminished, irrespective of the competence of the individuals and organisations requiring competence assurance.

Unite further believes the industry and government all now have the opportunity to push forward the long-held aspiration of many individual craftspeople, tradespeople and professionals, companies and organisations across construction and the built environment, not least those in safety critical occupations, for the introduction of regulatory systems of licence to practise and/or occupational regulation for individual qualified competence, bolstering the status of, using a nuclear industry term, suitably qualified and experienced personnel (SQEP), encompassing the requisite skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours (SKEB) relevant to their professions, trades and occupations.

Importantly, it should also be noted that whilst competency under the BSR (Building Safety Regulator) is primarily focused on England and Wales, strengthening the system will inevitably have repercussions UK wide. Unite therefore strongly urges that meaningful thought and consultation with industry is given as to how any new system integrates across the four nations of the United Kingdom, so that barriers to the mobility of companies, contractors, professionals, tradespeople and craftspeople are not inadvertently erected to the detriment of the wider UK economy and peoples' livelihoods.

Unite's membership within construction, building, civil engineering, engineering construction, and building services engineering, work across the total construction, engineering, energy, infrastructure and built environment process, building, maintaining, servicing and powering the civilisation we all rely upon. They are therefore rightly proud of their apprenticeships, qualifications, skills, knowledge, training, experience, ethics and professional behaviours. The delivery of safety and quality within the built environment for residents, occupants and building users is of paramount importance within that.

Therefore, our members repeatedly and understandably voice through their branches, national and regional committees, their concerns and frustrations regarding unqualified, underqualified and incompetent rogue companies and individuals either ignoring or circumnavigating established skills and competence structures in the shortest time frame possible. (Such structures are there for good reason, embedding safety, competence, experience, quality and craftsmanship). In construction, encompassing highly skilled and safety critical occupations, Unite maintains that UK craftspeople should be afforded the recognition, protections and respect that they deserve, and which is exactly the case for many construction professions, trades and occupations in other advanced world economies.

Bona fide industry developed and recognised apprenticeships, end point assessments, regulated qualifications, N/SVQs, experienced worker routes and assessments, ongoing CPD and bolt-on upskilling, training and qualifications, much of which attracts funding from the public purse, and/or investment by employers and workers themselves, bring additional value to society. They give people a sense of purpose, status, occupational identity, pride in the job and ongoing employment mobility in a profession, craft or trade, as a productive member of society contributing to the economy. It therefore should stand that their hard-earned status,

competence, skill and proficiency should be formally recognised, attracting the esteem it deserves, being properly valued and recognised by society.

Linked to the above, any system should not be onerous on both individuals and employers regarding training, and assessment, which should attract government, industry, client and employer investment in skills, including access to government and ITB levy based grants for both workers and companies. Workers should not have to carry the cost of fixing systemic deficiencies in the UK construction industry.

Unite would completely oppose and resist a 'job tax' emerging, driven by commercial interests in the training industry, where skilled workers throughout UK construction would have to self-fund expensive periodic revalidation, reassessment and/or CPD. The SLGs should be the ones specifying the requisite assessment, revalidation/CPD at industry level, not Further Education, private training providers and awarding organisations. Furthermore, accessible grants should be available to those who need to verify their competence or upskill (e.g. NVQ).

Unite is committed to the ongoing training and CPD of the workforce, but does not want to see the imposition of a 'job tax' on the professions, occupations and trades. There is a clear danger of a commercial 'racket' emerging, profiting from ordinary working people and SMEs, shamefully on the back of the Grenfell tragedy. For such a situation to be allowed to emerge would in our opinion be totally irresponsible and completely unacceptable.

In this evidence gathering and research exercise, Unite would be happy to facilitate for MHCLG meetings with Unite's construction lay membership and officers, through their structures within the union including the National Industrial Sector Committee (NISC), Electrical and Mechanical Combine (EMC), National Shop Stewards' Forum, and Section of Architectural Workers (SAW) who represent architects, architectural technologists, designers and allied administrative staff, Construction Industry Joint Council Reps, and the Construction Products and Materials Forum.

Considering all of the above, Unite maintains that the sector-specific competence frameworks developed, or in development, under the ICSG SLGs should be formally mandated by Government as setting the baseline for England and Wales (working with all devolved nations for UK-wide currency and mobility of skills) regarding occupational individual competence in the professions, trades and occupations. This should in tandem complement a responsible system of competence at client and organisational level for contractors/companies, with systems of licensing/registration for both individuals and companies.