



Homes: For Every Future

Realising the potential of a National Construction Skills Strategy for housing

The human cost of the housing emergency is profound, it deeply affects health, wealth and life opportunities across our nation. Every brick laid and every home insulated represents a direct investment in the Welsh economy. A bold plan for housing should see investment in housing as a local wealth generator and powerhouse for SMEs. As part of our campaign for change, [Homes: For Every Future](#), we are calling for the next government to take bold action to realise this potential through a **national construction skills strategy**.

THE CHALLENGE: A SECTOR AT A SKILLS CLIFF-EDGE

The housing emergency in Wales is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about the people who build and maintain them. Currently, our construction and retrofit sectors face a critical turning point that threatens our ability to deliver the homes Wales needs.

- **The Scale of the Shortfall:** To meet our Net Zero pathway, Wales faces a shortfall of 57,500 core retrofit workers by 2035. Current labor supply meets just 87% of demand and is projected to plummet to 25% over the next decade¹.
- **The Aging Workforce:** More skilled tradespeople are leaving the industry than joining. Without intervention, we lack the capacity to meet our ambitions.
- **The Training Gap:** There is a disconnect between high-level strategies and implementation. For example, Wales requires 700 new electrical apprentices annually, yet currently only 435 start training each year².

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/assessing-workforce-requirements-home-retrofitting-wales>

² <https://www.gov.wales/assessing-workforce-requirements-home-retrofitting-wales>





THE OPPORTUNITY: A CATALYST FOR WELSH RENEWAL

Investing in our homes is the best investment we can make in Wales' economic health. By aligning our housing goals with a bold skills strategy, we can turn a national emergency into a wave of opportunity for every community.

- **Economic Multiplier:** Meeting our affordable housing targets would create over 14,000 jobs and keep 85% of investment right here in Wales.
- **A future proofer career:** Scaling the retrofit economy offers a clear pathway for young people and potential for workers from industrial sectors to transition into stable, future-proofed roles.

A National Construction Skills Strategy

The economic benefits are clear, but we won't realise them unless we plan to close the gap between aspiration and delivery. The next Welsh Government should publish a **National Construction Skills Strategy** that aligns this opportunity with the capacity of the Further Education (FE) sector and the private supply chain and provides long term certainty. Five key actions which would turbo charge this work include:

1. [Map regional skills need and forecast demand for different sectors](#)
2. [Reform funding cycles](#)
3. [Prioritise accessible pathways and an agile curriculum](#)
4. [Make it easier for SMEs to participate and grow](#)
5. [The "Green Tech" Rebrand](#)





1. Map regional skills need and forecast demand for different sectors

- **Granular Data:** Instead of broad national targets, the strategy should map specific trade requirements by region. The Regional Skills Partnerships should play a central role in this, working with key sectors including housing associations and building strong industry intelligence from micro - larger businesses.
- **Don't reinvent the wheel:** Use data from upcoming Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) surveys, Welsh Government's Homes and Places Portal and [existing government analysis](#) to provide contractors and colleges with a 5-year "look-ahead" at the most common home interventions and construction forecasts.

[Top](#)

2. Reform funding cycles

- **The 3-5 Year Pipeline:** A central pillar must be the shift from annual "cliff-edge" funding to multi-year cycles. This provides SMEs with the financial certainty required to commit to 3-year apprenticeship contracts.
- **Outcome-Based Funding:** Incentivise training providers and employers based on apprenticeship completions and transition into sustained employment, rather than just initial enrolment numbers.

[Top](#)

3. Prioritise accessible pathways and an agile curriculum

- **Level 2 Expansion:** Formally integrate and fund Level 2 Construction Qualifications as a primary entry point. This lowers the barrier to entry for career-changers (such as those from the steel industry) and young people who may be put off by higher-level academic requirements.





- **Curriculum Alignment:** A mandate for colleges to update training modules in real-time based on industry feedback (e.g., prioritising kitchen fitting and insulation over traditional roofing for year-one carpentry apprentices). Making it easy for colleges and education providers to engage with sectors - at once - rather than individually by empowering the Regional Skills Partnerships to play a convening role.
- **Bite-Sized Reskilling:** Let's scale what works! Examples include Cardiff and Vale Green Skills Centre and Coleg Sir Gâr's Green Skills Academy could be used as a model to scale an approach that provides a modular "Green Skills" menu that allows the existing workforce to gain specific accreditations (like air-source heat pump installation) through short, intense courses that don't require them to leave the site for long periods.
- **Capturing Transferable Talent:** We must create dedicated "fast-track" entry points for workers from sectors in transition, such as Tata Steel and ex-military personnel. These individuals possess high-level engineering and technical skills that are directly transferable to modern green building.
- **Green Personal Learning Accounts:** Expand the use of Personal Learning Accounts. There is a huge opportunity to target the 116,000 workers³ in adjacent construction roles who can be redeployed into retrofit with the right support.
- **Bite-Sized Reskilling:** Fund modular "Green Skills" menus that allow the existing workforce to gain specific accreditations (like heat pump installation) through short, intense courses that don't require them to leave the site for long periods.

[Top](#)

4. Make it easier for SMEs to participate and grow

- **"Bid-Ready" Processes:** Not for profit housing associations will work with industry to simplify procurement to ensure local contractors—who often lack dedicated bid teams—can compete fairly.
- **Pastoral Care Infrastructure:** Fund Placement Facilitators within housing associations, colleges or regional hubs. These roles act as "buffers" for SMEs, providing the pastoral support and mentorship that young apprentices need to stay in the industry.

³ <https://www.gov.wales/assessing-workforce-requirements-home-retrofitting-wales>





- **Make it easier to support an apprentice:** Expand and mainstream shared apprenticeship schemes so that all organisations no matter how big or small can participate.

[Top](#)

5. The "Green Tech" Rebrand

- **Changing the Language:** Stop using technical jargon like "decarb" and "retrofit." Instead, talk about "improving homes," "lowering bills," and "ending fuel poverty" to connect with what people actually care about.
- **Early Outreach:** Go into schools and colleges earlier to demystify the industry, showing students that a career in housing is a high-tech, rewarding way to change lives.

[Top](#)

A Note of Thanks. The ideas in this note were produced via engagement with housing associations and partners via CHC's 'How to end the housing emergency' roundtable series. We are grateful to the following partners for their participation in those discussions: Federation of Master Builders Cymru, Colegau Cymru and Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru.

