

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Stone Industry Project Team

Issue No. 2 Summer 2001

Building on sound foundations

To have any validity, forward planning must be based upon sound research.

However researchers depend upon those in the industry to assist and the easiest way information can be gathered is by the use of a questionnaire. Such questionnaires are invariably designed to use "tick" boxes to minimise the time required for their completion with space being provided for the more willing to add additional "comments".

Research for the Industry

On behalf of, and in consultation with, the Stone Industry Project Team the Construction Industry Training Board constructed a questionnaire which was mailed to some 100 employers. Although the return rate (13%) was disappointing the statistics collated provide at least a window into the stone masonry side of the construction industry.

However some of the largest employers did willingly assist and it is estimated that the responses received account for approximately 50% of all stonemasons employed in Scotland.

It is therefore being accepted that the data gathered provides the basis for some meaningful decisions.

For example:-

1. 10% of all stonemasons will retire in the next 5 years

4. Almost 60% of employers also employed technicians and this equates to a ratio of one technician to eight stonemasons.
5. Disappointingly only three employers indicated that they made use of Computer Aided Design (CAD).
6. However 70% of those that responded indicated they wished to "upskill" their current workforce.
7. The number of trainees being sought this year stands at 16.

Taking the answers to points 1 and 7 it would appear that the intake of trainees this year will address the loss of skills as the more mature masons retire.

A note of caution

Statistics currently available indicate that the average "drop out" of trainees in the first year runs at around 20% and, coupled with this information, it is noted that every time there is a downturn in the construction industry many operatives seek alternative employment outwith the industry and invariably never return even when there is an upturn in activity.

So the forecast "skills shortage" may still become a reality.

However as indicated, although the data collated is considered to be of value the plea to everyone

- next 5 years.
2. For every four stonemasons there is one trainee.
 3. Virtually all employers involved with training indicated that their trainees were aiming at SVQ qualifications.

involved in the industry is:-

The next time you are asked to assist please make the time available as the information gathered could subsequently have a serious bearing on the future developments that could affect YOUR business.

"Stone in the City" 19th September

Attention is drawn to the above event that is being arranged by the Scottish Section of the Stone Federation GB.

Further details regarding this event, to be held in the Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling, have been included with this mailing and those interested in attending should ensure their booking is forwarded to the SFGB Scottish Section, PO Box 28011, Edinburgh EH16 6WN as soon as possible.

The speakers are as follows:

Mr A Bruce (Fyfe Glenrock): *Quarrying dimensional stone*

Mr P Buchanan (Principle Architect Historic Scot.): *Restoration of the Great Hall, Stirling Castle*

Mr N McLeish (Hugh Martin Partnership): *Stone in new build*

Mr P Harrison (Harrison Goldman Design): *Technical difficulties*

Mr I Maxwell (Director TCRE Historic Scotland): *Summing up*

Note - this event can contribute to members' RIAS CPD obligations.

Conservation training

Architects involved in conservation works will be aware that there is a drive by Historic Scotland, possibly reflected by other funders, to ensure that only architects with the appropriate conservation training are enabled to tender for grant aided works.

The logic behind such a move is very sound - namely that those funding such works wish to ensure that the monies are spent in the most efficient and appropriate manner.

Developing this issue, the SSLG is seeking to ensure the principle behind this "professional accreditation" is maintained across the delivery spectrum. In other words the same criteria that applies to architects, who plan and oversee the works, should also apply to the operatives who UNDERTAKE THE WORK.

This is not perceived as a "top to bottom" approach but addressing the issue right across a

Having accepted the principle, the SSLG, being aware that currently there are trade specific NVQ conservation modules available in England and Wales but no such SVQ qualification, raised the matter with the CITB.

On the 27th June Mr D Fergus, Scottish Manager CITB, with the support of Historic Scotland, convened a meeting of a number of trade associations, including plastering, stonemasonry, glass & glazing, bricklaying, painting & decorating and carpentry.

Those present accepted the principle and it is now a matter for the CITB to develop this interest with each specific trade association.

It is known that already the Stone Federation GB Scottish Section, the Scottish Plastering & Drylining Association and the National Federation of Roofing Contractors have notified the CITB of their interest in pursuing this matter

approach but addressing the issue right across a horizontal delivery spectrum with each profession and skill dependent upon each other to ensure the satisfactory completion of the particular work.

The principle is that EVERY skilled person (plus the management structure) should receive conservation training appropriate to his/her particular activity, skill and level of operation. In this way, from initiation to completion, the appropriate skills will be available during every activity - even when the architect is not on site.

their interest in pursuing this matter.

With the accreditation of SVQs later this year it is hoped that the trade associations that are interested will work with the CITB to consider the current NVQ modular conservation structure to determine if these could be either adopted or adapted to meet the needs of the Scottish industry.

Conservation - LIME

The Scottish Lime Centre Trust, Charlestown, Fife has recently completed the conversion of a former estate workshop to create an all-weather training and education facility.

The building, in addition to providing a training facility, will also house an exhibition of traditional building technology aimed at schools, students, building owners and the general public. The new facilities comprise a lecture room, an indoor workshop and a yard ideal for demonstrating building techniques.

In addition there is the development of the experimental lime kiln which provides a comprehensive programme of research into the properties of various limes.

Such research will influence future developments of lime production and it is anticipated that this will encourage the reintroduction of small-scale lime burning in Scotland. (see www.scotlime.org) For more information contact the Scottish Lime Centre Trust Tel: 01383 872 722 Fax: 01383 872 744.

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