

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Stone Industry Project Team

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Conservation modules

Both Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund appear to be moving towards a situation where only architects with the appropriate conservation training will be considered when grant aided work is out to tender.

Whilst supporting this development the SSLG, aware that architects do not actually do the work and are not always present on site to ensure that it is being done to the approved standard, has sought to secure similar qualifications for the trade operatives.

Trade Conservation SVQs

On exploration of this issue the SSLG was concerned to establish that there were NO trade conservation VQs available in Scotland and, recognising that such did exist south of the Border in the form of NVQs, has sought to encourage the development of similar SVQs in Scotland.

The CITB, supporting the SSLG in this respect, then convened a number of meetings with its "Practitioners Groups" (the employer body consultation groups) at which the contents of the NVQs were discussed and considered.

The outcome is that these employer organisations have approved such SVQ module qualifications plastering, stone masonry, carpentry and joinery and bricklaying. The CITB is currently progressing these qualifications with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and it is anticipated that they will be accredited and available this autumn.

In addition it is understood from the CITB that negotiations are continuing with both the Glass & Glazing Federation and the Scottish Decorators' Federation in the hope that they too will support this development.

It is stressed that these are "bolt on" conservation modules and that they will only be available to skilled operatives.

However it follows that, whilst the Indigenous Materials Group is seeking to ensure the appropriate materials are available it is essential that the appropriate skills are also available, and that the training is done to the recognised trade standard with the appropriate qualification available.

Training - One step forward and one step back?

The Project Team, at its meeting in February, whilst having previously welcomed the growth in the stone masonry training figures for 2001/2, was surprised to be advised that there was concern at the qualification outcome figures.

Whilst these are still in general terms the figures did indicate that, although the trainee intake figures for the entire construction industry met, and in some cases exceed, the agreed targets, the number of trainees securing the SVQ3 qualification was "quite disappointing".

As indicated this is now a matter of further research to determine why the numbers of those securing the SVQ3 qualification did not reflect the initial trainee intake.

It is hoped that this further research and subsequent analysis will be available for the next edition of this Newsletter.

Further statistics

General press comments (21st January) from construction industry "employers" indicated that some 80% were experiencing difficulties recruiting bricklayers with some 60% indicating that there was a shortage of carpenters.

But closer examination of the CITB intake figures show that only 36% of all Scottish construction industry employers actually OFFER training opportunities.

So the question to those employers who are complaining about the lack of these skills is **"What are YOU going to do about it?"**

If YOU do not have the necessary skilled staff will you turn work away or will YOU recruit those with lesser skills and hope to muddle through?

To put no finer point on it "Are you prepared to let the success and development of YOUR business be controlled by others?"

Whilst the above is serious further examination of statistics show that Scottish employers provide approximately 20% of the CITB UK intake figures, which on a UK population basis is twice that which would be anticipated.

So if the situation in Scotland is causing some concern then imagine the situation that exists south of the border where only 15% (CITB statistics) of employers provide training opportunities.

It is argued by many, and it is a sustainable argument, the growth of the Labour Only Sub-contractor is the basis of the problem. Such "single company" operatives are paid on output and therefore have no wish to be held back by training anyone.

Such a situation only breeds the "cowboy" builder who can go from job to job to be sacked only when their skill deficiency is identified. The damage that may have been done, the threat to the safety of others on these sites only arising when accidents occur - and this is in an industry which the accident statistics collated by the HSE show dangerous it can be.

Scottish Lime Centre: Official opening

The official opening of the Scottish Lime Centre will be on 15th April when it is anticipated that a Minister from the Scottish Executive will officiate at the ceremony.

The Trust is developing a range of training opportunities and this includes a positive outreach to schools in the area to enable the more senior student understand and experience the construction industry.

Such courses will lead to a qualification recognised and approved by the Scottish Qualification Authority.

Such training will make a significant contribution to the skills and material knowledge and understanding of both experienced operatives and also trainees.

The next meeting of the Scottish Plastering &

The centre has also developed SVQ modules for the use of lime both as internal and external wall cladding material. Such courses are available for both experienced operatives and trainees.

Drywall Association will be held in the premises of the Centre and later in the day its members will have the opportunity to tour the Centre.

Planning: Strategic review

The SSLG had submitted a response to the above review that had been initiated by the Scottish Executive.

The findings, detailed in the Research Report No. 136, indicate that in total some 311 responses were received but also reported, of these, that some 151 were received from Fife. Such a large response, from this clearly defined geographical area, could influence the statistics and this will require to be taken into account. (www.scotland.gov.uk/planning for further information)

In its response the SSLG had sought to ensure that the material needs of Scotland's built heritage were addressed, and suggested that a resource analysis should be completed - the SSLG recommended that it should be the responsibility of Historic Scotland, before ANY "sleeping" quarry was used as a landfill site.

The Research Findings clearly has picked up on the "waste" issue and the mineral requirements although there was no consensus on how best these issue could be reconciled.

The Group had also recorded its reservation to the establishing of the 4 city-region strategic planning areas. The concern was based on the fact that the quarries currently supplying dimensional stone for the appropriate care and maintenance of Scotland's built heritage were NOT located in the cities but in the countryside.

The possibility of a "conflict of interests" between these 4 cities and councils elsewhere in Scotland, in respect to "need" of one and the local rural environment of the other could have created significant problems.

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