



UK CONSTRUCTION SME ALLIANCE

Founded by Robin Hayhurst BSc (Hons) MCIOB & Jenny Creamer

UK CONSTRUCTION SME ALLIANCE

24 April 2026

This letter is addressed to -

The Rt Hon Chris McDonald MP, Minister for Industry, Co-Chair Construction Leadership Council (CLC)

The Rt Hon the Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister for Skills, Skills England

Sarah Jones MP, Minister of State, Dept. for Business and Trade, Dept. for Energy Security and Net Zero, Co-Chair Construction Skills Mission Board (CSMB)

Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State, Housing, Communities and Local Government

Alex Fitzpatrick, Director of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Joint Skills Strategy, and Young People Directorate

Sir Peter Lauener, Chair, Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Linda Armstrong OBE, Chair, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)

CITB/ECITB Merger Consultation (closing 14 June 2026)

AN OPEN LETTER: SME REPRESENTATION IN CONSTRUCTION GOVERNANCE

Calling for at least 50% of seats on the CITB Industry Funding Committee, the Construction Leadership Council (CLC), and The Construction Skills Mission Board to be held by practising SME construction business owners.

“participation of micro and small firms is key to unlocking growth starts”

– Tim Balcon, CEO CITB

1. WHO WE ARE

This letter is written by SME and Micro construction business owners, independent construction training providers, and training advisors across the United Kingdom. We are the businesses that build Britain's homes, maintain its infrastructure, train its tradespeople, employ trade apprentices, and pay the CITB levy year after year.

We represent 99% of UK construction firms, and we account for the majority of the industry's workforce. The government's own housebuilding targets cannot be delivered without us.

We are not anti-CITB. We are not opposed to the principle of an industry training levy. Many of us have supported the CITB model throughout our careers and continue to believe it has an essential role to play. But belief in a model does not require silence in the face of its failures. And there have been serious failures.

2. THE FAILURES WE CANNOT IGNORE

Over the past twelve months, CITB has made a series of decisions that have caused significant, demonstrable harm to all construction businesses, in particular SME and micro employers across the UK, with the following having the largest impact:

- In August 2025, CITB announced the sudden closure of the Skills and Training Fund — a programme worth up to £10,000 potentially twice a year to smaller businesses — with minimal notice and no consultation with those most affected.
- In September 2025, CITB slashed essential short course funding — site safety courses including SMSTS and SSSTS, which are critical to every construction business, were reduced to just 30% of market value, a rate set artificially low by CITB itself. Level 7 qualifications were removed entirely.
- In December 2025, CITB Employer Networks funding was reduced from 70% to 50% for remaining eligible courses, first aid no longer supported.
- All funding decisions were made without adequate warning to employers and training providers who had planned and committed resources around these grants.
- In February 2026 CITB Employer Networks ran out of funds for the remaining financial year and did not inform employers or training providers.
- In March 2026, CITB introduced new Employer Networks funding caps that leave micro firms with as little as £1,500 per year (incl. VAT) — a reduction that Jenny Creamer of Gloucestershire Construction Training Group described as having "a huge detrimental impact" on small and micro

construction businesses, and “seriously impacting business sustainability, growth and employment”.

- CITB defunded its network of regional Construction Training Groups with no consultation of any kind — not with the Groups themselves, not with the SMEs who depended on them, and not with the training providers who worked alongside them. These were local bodies, established 60 years ago, providing training advice, an outsourced training department for smaller employers, large discounts with accredited training providers, funding support within and outside of CITB, links to colleges for apprenticeships, networking, and educational events. They were removed with three months’ notice, without replacement, and without any plan for how the support function they provided would be maintained. It has not been. SMEs who once had a local point of contact now face an increasingly complex and inaccessible funding system with no one to turn to.
- Throughout this period, SME owners and training providers were not consulted in any meaningful way. Decisions were made, communicated late (or not at all), and absorbed by the smallest businesses in the industry.

CITB's Chief Executive has since issued a public apology and acknowledged that the body's transparency "isn't hitting the mark". Whilst we welcome that acknowledgement, apologies without structural change are not enough. The industry has heard promises before.

The root cause of these failures is not a communications problem. It is a governance problem. And governance problems require governance solutions.

“I am keen to see more SME voices within our governance at CITB and I will take every opportunity to champion SMEs who want to be more involved.”

– Deborah Madden, CE CITB

3. THE GOVERNANCE GAP

The **CITB Industry Funding Committee** — the body that controls how levy money is allocated — currently has five seats held by representatives of large contractors: Keltbray, BAM Nuttall, VolkerWessels UK, Danny Sullivan Group, and Novus Property Solutions. There is no practising SME owner on this committee. Not one.

The **Construction Leadership Council (CLC)** — which advises ministers directly on construction policy, skills, and the future of the sector — has no dedicated SME voice at board level. The closest representation is the Federation of Master Builders CEO, who sits on the wider Council, not the Board where strategic decisions are made.

The **Construction Skills Mission Board (CSMB)** — a joint government and industry body established by the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) to tackle construction skills shortages to support delivery on government’s housing and infrastructure commitments — has no SME board member.

This is not a coincidence. It is a structural failure that has been allowed to persist while the industry’s smallest businesses bear the consequences of decisions made without them.

CITB’s own published data shows that 99.6% of assessed employers are SME and micro businesses. The government acknowledges that SMEs are essential to delivering the UK’s housebuilding targets. The CLC itself states that over 90% of the industry is made up of SMEs.

And yet the bodies that govern this industry — that control its training funds, shape its policy, and advise its ministers — are dominated by the 1% of firms large enough to put their name on a tier-one framework.

4. OUR VISION FOR CITB, THE CLC AND CSMB

We are not here simply to criticise. We have a clear, constructive, and deliverable vision for what CITB, the CLC, and CSMB should become.

We believe CITB should be reformed, restructured, and repositioned as a genuine ambassador for the construction industry, with the CLC and the CSMB reflecting the whole construction industry being — **entirely industry lead** — including and especially its SME majority.

Specifically, we call for:

OUR DEMANDS

- At least 50% of seats on the CITB Industry Funding Committee to be held by practising SME construction business owners — not trade association officials, not large contractor representatives, but people who run small firms, pay the levy, and depend on its fair administration.
- At least 50% of seats on the Construction Leadership Council to be held by practising SME construction business owners — so that the body advising ministers on the industry’s future reflects the industry’s actual composition.
- At least 50% of seats on the Construction Skills Mission Board to be held by practising SME construction business owners — so that support is given for SMEs to fill the trades skills gap to help reach government’s house building targets and engage new entrants.

- A transparent selection process for these seats, with independent oversight, open to any qualifying SME owner, regardless of trade association membership.
- That the ongoing CITB/ECITB merger consultation (closing 14 June 2026) explicitly addresses SME representation as a structural requirement of any new or reformed body — not as an afterthought.
- That CITB be repositioned as an industry ambassador — a body that actively champions the training, development, and commercial survival of the SME sector, and is governed by people who understand what that means from lived experience. Employer lead and demand driven.

These are not unreasonable demands. They are proportionate responses to a demonstrable and long-standing governance failure. They do not require CITB to be abolished or the levy to be scrapped. They require CITB, the CLC, and CSMB to reflect the industry they exist to serve.

5. WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The timing of this letter is deliberate. The government has launched a 12-week consultation on the potential merger of CITB and ECITB. This is the most significant structural decision facing the industry's training infrastructure in a generation.

If that merger proceeds without addressing the governance failure at the heart of CITB's current problems, the new body will inherit those same structural flaws. A larger organisation with the same democratic deficit is not a solution. It is a more expensive version of the problem.

We urge you, Minister, to ensure that SME representation is a condition, not a consideration, of any reformed or merged body. We urge CITB's Chair to treat this letter not as a complaint, but as a mandate — a clear statement from the majority of the industry about the governance it expects and deserves.

6. WHAT WE ARE ASKING OF YOU

We ask for three things:

- A formal written response to this letter, addressing each of the demands set out in Section 4, within 28 days of receipt.
- A commitment to include SME board representation as a specific question within the CITB/ECITB merger consultation process, and to publish the results of responses on this point.
- A meeting between the Minister's office, CITB's Chair, and a delegation of SME signatories to this letter, to discuss the path to structural reform.

We are a large and growing coalition. We are patient but not passive. We believe in the value of industry training investment, and we believe CITB can be the body this industry deserves. But that will only happen if the people who run this industry — the small builders, the sole traders, the micro firms — are finally given a genuine seat at the table.

Yours faithfully, on behalf of the UK Construction SME Alliance,

Robin Hayhurst BSc(Hons) MCIQB — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
Construction Business Mentor robinhayhurst.com

Jenny Creamer — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
Gloucestershire Construction Training Group (not for profit enterprise)

Holly Kattenhorn MCIQB Assoc CIPD CertIOSH — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
L.A Kattenhorn & Partners Limited (Road Surfacing Contractor)

Vance Babbage FCIQB — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
Director, B&M Babbage & Co. Ltd. (Commercial and Domestic Builders)

Keith Hopkinson Tech IOSH — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
Director, Knox & Wells Limited (Construction Contractors)

Debbie Carlton BSc (Hons), CEng — Co-Founder, UK Construction SME Alliance
Director, Dynamic Knowledge

Signed also by:

Construction SME Owners/Directors / Supporters of Construction SMEs collated and verified via [SIGN LETTER \(click to sign\)](#)

CC

Jason Poulter, Unite National Officer for Construction

Brian Berry, Chief Executive, Federation of Master Builders

Richard Beresford, CEO, National Federation of Builders (& Home Builders Association)

Dr. Victoria Hills, CEO, Chartered Institute of Building
James Talman, CEO, National Federation of Roofing Contractors
Confederation of Roofing Contractors
Suzannah Nichol OBE, CEO, Build UK
Steve Mulholland, CEO, Construction Plant Association
Iain McIlwee, CEO, Finishes & Interiors Sector
Robert Candy, CE, The Scaffolding Association
Regional Directors, Civil Engineering Contracts Association
Scottish Building Federation
National Federation of Demolition Contractors
Sarah Spink CEO The Liquid Roofing Waterproofing Association
Dr Ronan Brunton, CEO, The Single Ply Roofing Association
British Constructional Steelwork Association
Christopher Stride, Chair, Insulating Concrete Formwork Association
Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering
British Woodworking Federation
Building Engineering Services Association
Institution of Civil Engineers
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
National House Building Council
Structural Timber Association
Chartered Association of Building Engineers
Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers
John Newcombe, CE, Builders Merchants Federation
Construction Products Association
Viki Bell, CE, Construction Equipment Association
Ian Shapiro, CEO, Building Research Establishment

SOURCES & EVIDENCE

All governance data taken from CITB's own published website and parliamentary submissions. Industry composition statistics sourced from FMB, CIOB, and the Insolvency Service. Employer Networks funding figures sourced from CITB updates March 2026. CITB IFC membership verified from CITB's published governance pages. CLC membership verified from constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk. CSMB membership verified from www.gov.co.uk