

Scaffolding Insider

NEWS | FEATURES | COMMERCIAL | HEALTH & SAFETY

MAY 2024

TAKE IT TO THE BRIDGE

Working on critical
infrastructure

MISSED
OPPORTUNITY

What about the 16 year olds?

DON'T LEAVE
IT TOO LATE

New focus on HR

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SCHEDULE:

◆ 8:00am – 4:00pm	EXPO
◆ 9:00am – 4:30pm	CONFERENCE
◆ 6:30pm – 01:00am	BALL & AWARDS

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From the Editor

I'm aware there has been something of a theme over our first few issues of Scaffolding Insider and that has been: employees and recruitment. There's good reason for this: recruiting and retaining good people remains one of the industry's number one challenges – perhaps even the number one challenge itself.

While there has been much focus previously on NASC's new Talent Solution, this month we have a couple of new angles on the issue.

Firstly on page 7, we look at the issue of getting 16-18 year olds into the industry. Most companies won't even look at this age group when it comes to recruitment but there's an argument – made in the article by Past President Lynn Way and CEO Clive Dickin – that this is a huge missed opportunity. Contrary to some people's understanding, there is little to no legislation or guidance that prevents 16 and 17 year olds working on site but there are some additional obligations. Find out the pros and the cons in the article – and have your say by contacting the new NASC Training Committee if you have a view.

On pages 13-14, we hear from two experts in HR and Industrial Relations regarding some of the bread-and-butter issues for those running scaffolding businesses. There's a real danger that HR issues just get pushed down the agenda while you're dealing with the day-to-day challenges of running a business, keeping customers happy and trying to turn a profit. But have a read of the article just to make sure you're on top of all the critical issues relating to the people side of your business. Investing a bit of time now could save you from an expensive disaster down the line.

Our cover feature this issue looks at two companies' extraordinary bridge projects. Alltask and ISS know their way around a bridge and share with us some of the challenges they overcame in technically demanding environments. I know there are plenty more jobs like this out there, so if you'd like to share yours, please just drop us an email.

You'll find all your usual news on pages 4-6 and page 12. The latter is dedicated to news from NASC, including the Talent Solution portal going live, news on regional meetings and CEO Surgeries, and the launch of two important new guidance documents. Do go and explore the Talent Solution portal, which needs your support to help it achieve its ambition of being a game-changer for recruitment in the industry.

I hope you enjoy the issue.



Nick Campion
Editor

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Ouse Valley Viaduct. Photo courtesy of Alltask

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WINNERS REVEALED AT SCAFFCHAMP 2024

ScaffChamp 2024 has just been completed and has named its 2024 champion. The winning team was N-Projects from Poland, followed by Cumiskey Scaffolding from Ireland and NBIK from Mongolia.

ScaffChamp was devised and is run by the Baltic Scaffolders Association and is designed to showcase excellence in scaffolding from across the world. The event, which was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, was livestreamed around the globe, complete with live commentary from experts, along with analysis and interviews. Over 400 spectators also enjoyed the event in person.

Britain was represented by Rose System Scaffolding, who came 5th, Connect Scaffolding, who came 9th, and Star Scaffolding, who came 20th. There were also British representatives among the officials, with the Referee Team led by Mark Parkin of Be Remarkable, as well as Joe Thompson from Layher UK, Alan Osborne from Osborne Scaffolding, and Damien Shawcroft from Mr Safedeck. Among the sponsors were Layher, Kewazo, Simian Skill and Scaffmag.



PICTURE CREDIT: Scaffmag



Connect Scaffolding



Star Scaffolding



Rose System Scaffolding

Government pays out to keep HS2 moving

It is reported that the Government is set to pay the upfront tunnelling cost for the final HS2 main tunnel drive under London to Euston station of around £1bn to avoid further costly delays on the project.

In October, the project was halted as part of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's £6.5bn cost-cutting plan, which involved axing Phase 2 to Manchester and finding a private investor to pay for the final 5.4-mile tunnel to the station and the redevelopment of the Euston site.

Three months ago, Parliament's Public Accounts Committee warned the Government that it had to end the indecision over how to privately fund the HS2 London terminus and main tunnel drive, concluding that costs could only soar further. Sir John Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, had also warned that the Government would never get the private sector to pay for the final tunnel dig.



PICTURE CREDIT: HS2

UK emerges from recession



Andrew Bailey

New figures show that stronger than expected growth at the start of the year saw the UK emerge from recession. The economy grew by 0.6% between January and March, the fastest rate for two years,

official figures showed. The UK had fallen into recession at the end of last year after shrinking for two three-month periods in a row.

The governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, said that the UK was seeing a recovery, although it was not a strong one.

Interest rates are currently at their highest for 16 years, meaning people are paying more to borrow money for things such as mortgages and loans, but savers have also received better returns. Mortgage rates have been creeping up in recent weeks, after forecasts for when the Bank of England would cut borrowing costs were pushed back.

Altrad acquires Stork

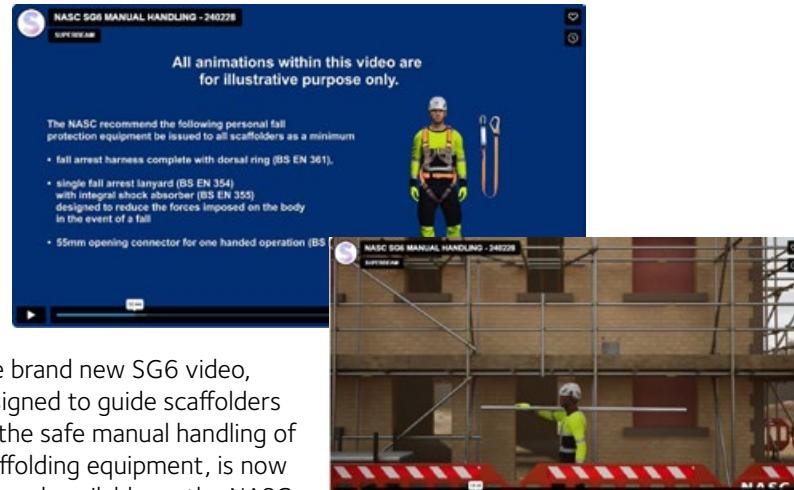


Altrad has announced an agreement to acquire Stork TS Holdings Limited, the parent company of the Stork UK group of companies. The deal marks a significant expansion for Altrad and, pending regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions, is expected to be finalised in the third quarter of 2024.

"We are delighted to welcome Stork UK into the Altrad family," stated John Walsh, CEO of Altrad for the UK, Ireland, Nordics & Poland. "The acquisition represents a wonderful opportunity to extend our portfolio of services in the United Kingdom offshore sector, whilst enhancing the outcomes we deliver for our clients."

Stork UK will bring around 1,800 skilled employees into the Altrad Group, promising opportunities for career development and advancement.

SG6 GOES LIVE



The brand new SG6 video, designed to guide scaffolders on the safe manual handling of scaffolding equipment, is now live and available on the NASC eportal. Good manual handling technique is critical to ensuring safety and preventing injury that could badly affect both company and employee.

The new SG6 video uses state-of-the-art digital animation in order to generate realistic environments and situations that members can relate to. The added advantage is that being a digital video, it can be quickly updated with any new developments or techniques. The video can also be used in Virtual Reality environments.

Plans approved for Lord's redevelopment

Plans for a £61.8m redevelopment of two stands at Lord's cricket ground have been approved. The work, voted through by Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) members last week, will increase the ground's capacity by 1,100 seats. The existing Allen Stand will be demolished and rebuilt with an extra tier added. Meanwhile, a fourth level will also be built on to the Tavern Stand. Construction is due to begin at the end of the current season in September and will be completed by 2027.

MCC Members' approval comes after Westminster City Council's Planning Committee unanimously resolved to grant planning consent to the Tavern and Allen project at a meeting on 16 April.

John Graham Construction Ltd is the preferred bidder for the main contract to build the development and MCC will now proceed to finalise the contract with them over the coming weeks.





ScaffFloat in contention

ScaffFloat, which made the shortlist in the NASC Awards 2023 in the Innovation category, has been shortlisted for the Bridge Maintenance Contractor award at the upcoming National Bridge Awards.

The Cornish firm joins industry heavyweights Network Rail and Balfour Beatty in contention for the accolade. *"This recognition underscores ScaffFloat's rapid ascent and the growing respect we command within the construction sector,"* said Toby Budd, Managing Director of ScaffFloat. *"Our innovative system and proven track record are gaining attention. I extend my gratitude to our exceptional team for their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to customer safety."*

New Guidance On Tax And VAT Released

NASC has released two important new guidance documents that are now available in the members' only area of the website.

CG24:24 Employment Tax Guide leads members through the complexities of deciding if workers are employed or self-employed; the implications of IR35; how to deal with agency workers when it comes to tax; and whether the CIS (Construction Industry Scheme) applies to you.

CG25:24 VAT Guidance explores the introduction of the Domestic Reverse Charge (DRC), which is intended to combat missing trader fraud and represents a major change to the way VAT is collected in the building and construction industry.

It is important for all businesses in the sector to fully understand these two vital tax areas. Visit the members' only area of the website now to read more.

New enquiry at Hinkley Point C

The environmental impact of a new nuclear power station will be the subject of a new planning inquiry. EDF Energy secured planning consent for the Hinkley Point power station in 2013 and construction began in 2016. The planning permission required EDF to invest in a number of measures to offset the environmental impact of the new facility. The company is now seeking to make a number of changes to the agreed measures, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

EDF held an initial round of public consultation in January and February over its proposals for new saltmarshes on the Pawlett Hams. The plans will see the creation of more than 800 acres of saltmarsh, providing habitats for fish and animals, improving water quality and reducing flood risks. Hinkley Point C said the new saltmarsh would be a natural alternative to installing an acoustic fish deterrent.

The proposals will be in addition to other measures in the Bristol Channel to offset the power station's impact, including planting seagrass and kelp, developing native oyster beds and removing weirs on three rivers to help fish reach breeding grounds.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Director sentenced

The director of a Leeds-based construction firm who failed to keep up-to-date accounting records and explain why his company spent more than £800,000 on over 100 vehicles has been given a suspended prison sentence. Eugenijus Nalivaika was sentenced to 15 months in prison, suspended for 18 months, when he appeared at Leeds Crown Court after Niki Contractors was liquidated with liabilities of more than £2.5m, and Nalivaika's breaches prevented the liquidator from being able to investigate the company's accounts.

Social homes target

The cross-party Levelling Up, Housing and Communities committee has published its findings into the finances and sustainability of the social housing sector and called for ministers to set and publish target for social rented homes. The MPs encouraged the government to 'support, regulate and invest in' the social housing sector in order to increase delivery to 90,000 social rented homes a year. It found that financial pressures are causing social housing providers to cut the amount they are spending on building new homes.

Mace changes

Mace has made changes to its senior management team, with its construction head leaving, a new boss appointed to lead its consulting business, and group deputy chief executive Jason Millett promoted to the top role next January, with Mark Reynolds becoming executive chairman.

600 more skyscrapers

London's famous skyline could become more crowded with almost another 600 tall buildings, according to a report by New London Architecture (NLA), a thinktank on the capital's built environment. The organisation's tenth annual tall buildings report says there are 583 structures of more than 20 storeys that could become new additions to the city's skyline. The figure far exceeds the 270 built across London in the last 10 years.

Selective contractors

The latest Market Report from international property and construction consultancy Gleeds shows that contractors remain selective about taking on new work, with almost 90% saying they or their supply chain had declined a tender in the previous three months. Nearly 40% of all respondents claimed to have had difficulty securing a sufficient number of tenderers for projects over the same period.



MISSED OPPORTUNITY

"We need more young blood in the industry. We're not getting people coming through from school and it's not a career path they are being made aware of – some don't even know what scaffolding is! Employers seem to find difficulties with employing 16-18 year olds and it's such a missed opportunity."

So says Lynn Way, Company Secretary & Financial Director at Chris Sedgeman Scaffolding Ltd and Past President of NASC. Clive Dickin, CEO of NASC, agrees: *"The industry is desperate for recruits and is missing hundreds of thousands of 16 and 17 year olds. We're not even in the discussion when it comes to career options for these young people. We have to give ourselves a fighting chance."*

Clive points to the lack of capacity in colleges who, understandably, offer courses where they have both the expertise and the facilities to deliver the training in a profitable way. Scaffolding needs expertise, facilities and plenty of space, so no wonder perhaps that students are funnelled towards other trades such as bricklaying or joinery. He adds: *"We have to reach a position where scaffolding training is offered more widely so school-leavers can see it as an option. Equally, we have to educate schools about this career path, which is not well understood. This is a great career in a good industry where you can quickly earn a good amount of money. It should be seen as an alternative career path for suitable students, not a second-class route."*

There are some in the industry who mistakenly believe that they can't take on 16-18 year olds. This is not the case, although there are certainly additional responsibilities.

A 'young person' is defined as anyone under the age of 18. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, employers have a responsibility to ensure that young people employed by them are not exposed to risks due to a lack of experience or maturity, as they are more likely to be unaware of risks in the workplace.

Construction employers should expect a young person to demonstrate a core set of employability or work readiness skills, to provide the confidence that they will be able to carry out their role safely and effectively.

Employees must also have functional literacy, numeracy and ICT skills – a contentious issue but with both main political parties adhering to the same line on this issue, it's unlikely to change soon.

On site, an employer will need to have proper supervisory arrangements in place, and ensure that they comply with health and safety, insurance and other regulations to ensure the wellbeing of the young person. The employer must support the young person to ensure they hold an appropriate CSCS card and that suitable risk assessments are carried out. Young people have a greater entitlement to rest breaks than adult workers, including a daily rest period of 12 consecutive hours per day; a weekly rest period of 48 hours per week; and a rest break of 30 minutes where daily working time is more than 4.5 hours. Employers are advised to inform their insurer if a young person is working on site and provide them with a copy of the young person's risk assessment in relation to their role.

Even with these extra obligations, the industry must make an effort to recruit these young people, says Lynn: *"Yes, it is harder because of the additional obligations and because clients need to be reassured too – but success, as it is with any new employee, is down to consistent hard work, the right attitude and being prepared to be on site every day at 7am and to work hard all day every day. Of course it's a big transition from school and some won't be ready – but some are, and we've seen it happen."*

Lynn says that training must become more available across the country. Clive Dickin adds, *"In the first instance we need to be realistic: we're not suddenly going to get full scaffolding apprenticeships springing up all over the country – we're looking at a 10-15 year plan to sort out this issue. In the meantime we need to think strategically and see how we might piggyback existing FE courses, just to start introducing our industry to young people, colleges and schools alike."*

This issue is firmly on the new NASC Training Committee's agenda and the committee would very much welcome your views. Please email your thoughts to: enquiries@nasc.org.uk

TAKE IT TO THE BRIDGE

Bridges are far more than simply functional structures of steel and concrete, they are the lifelines of connectivity that knit together regions, communities, towns and cities, ensuring the smooth running of people, traffic and industry. So integral are bridges to the social and economic fabric of the UK that any time that they are in need of refurbishment or repair, it is vital that this happens with speed, precision, and total safety.

This is where high-quality scaffolders come in. Scaffolding is an essential component in bridge repair, providing the necessary support and access for workers to perform maintenance and restoration tasks safely and effectively. Working on bridges is a highly technical challenge, as we will discover by looking at five bridge projects from two expert NASC members.

Infrastructure Site Services (ISS): Tyne Bridge

ISS Ltd is providing the scaffolding for the Tyne Bridge restoration scheme for Esh Construction over the River Tyne between Newcastle and Gateshead. Access is provided largely for steel repairs and blasting and painting works to be carried out.

The project has presented several challenges to overcome, primarily redistributing the load imposed by the scaffold back to strategic locations on the Gateshead quayside to avoid the businesses below, which have remained live throughout the scheme. There are 13 towers nestled between the existing businesses to avoid any disruption; some of these towers are made up of as many as 15 legs with a maximum leg load around a cluster of legs of 200kN. All of this carries a huge 22mx20m protection deck above the Gateshead quayside so works above can progress completely isolated from everyone below.

To add to the already challenging scope, the bridge remains home to the furthest inland breeding colony of Kittiwake seabirds in the world. Provision for their breeding has been facilitated by the installation of kittiwake hotels on the existing main bridge towers whilst the structural steel they are familiar with remains contained and sealed for the refurbishment works.



Installation of the first phase of work is now complete with blasting works soon to commence. Subsequent phases will see scaffold being erected in a similar fashion on the Newcastle quayside before ISS then tackles the main span access over the river next year and then the main arch works the following year.

Back in 1999, before the days of aluminium beams being used so extensively in scaffolding, ISS's very own Managing Director was a key member of the scaffolding team delivering this prestigious project and there is a great deal of pride for him and the team at ISS to be once again involved with such an iconic structure.





Infrastructure Site Services (ISS): Berwick Old Bridge

The Grade 1 listed Berwick Old Bridge reaches 355m across the River Tweed and is made up of 15 spans, all of which are to receive critical masonry repairs ahead of its 400th birthday this August.

The structure provides many challenges. The River Tweed is tidal and therefore the piers can only be accessed during short low-tide windows each day. Given that the scaffolds become submerged during high tide, special resin anchors have been incorporated into the design. The bridge, given its age and the nature of construction also doesn't have a single span the same as any other, so every span has had to be addressed individually. Quite a challenge when the scaffold is to be fully contained and sealed.

Installation of the first phase of work is now complete. Up next will be the dismantle of Phase 1, followed immediately



with the installation of phase 2. During the work, the bridge has been closed to vehicles but open to pedestrians, therefore ISS has installed corrugated sheeting along each inside face to offer complete protection to the public during the work.

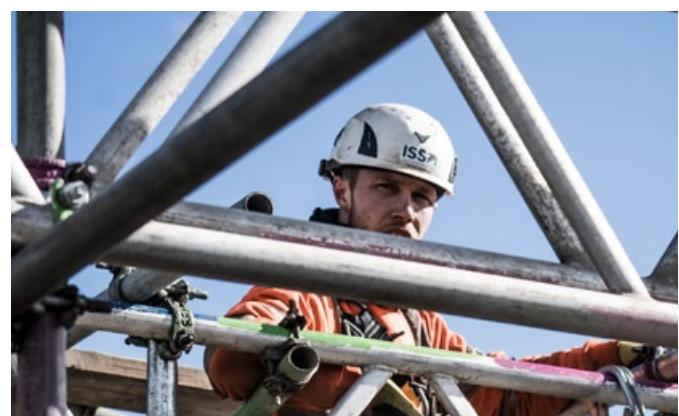
A proprietary bogey system has been included in each independent to allow the stonemasons to roll stones along the length of the scaffold to feed into each respective span as required from loading bays at the end of the bridge.

Infrastructure Site Services (ISS): High Level Bridge

ISS is undertaking the scaffolding element of the High Level Bridge part refurbishment scheme for AmcoGiffen over the River Tyne between Newcastle Upon Tyne and Gateshead.

The project has presented several challenges – primarily redistributing the load imposed by the scaffold back to the main arches of the bridge. The solution was to install ladder beam details along the profile of the arches, carrying a 750mm X beam detail above the existing footpaths. The footpath was then core drilled to allow drop tubes hung from the X beam detail to carry matching longitudinal 750mm X beams below the bridge without clashing with any of the structural steel beneath the road deck. 450mm beams have then been underslung to create a complete underdeck with zero contact points across the elements of the bridge to be worked on. The beam and hanger detail has then provided a structural backdrop onto which ISS could shrink wrap and final seal the scaffold to create a complete weather containment for blasting and painting works to begin. An elegant and efficient solution to a complex problem.

Installing the topside scaffold and underdeck scaffold concurrently to stay well ahead of programme and having them match up perfectly is testament to the scaffolding team on site.





Alltask: Ouse Valley Viaduct

Alltask is playing a pivotal role in supporting Octavius Infrastructure's brick and stonework repair scheme for arches 1-8 of the Grade II listed Ouse Valley Viaduct in West Sussex.



The Ouse Valley Viaduct, located between Haywards Heath and Balcombe, is an iconic structure comprising 37 identical arches. It stands at 29 metres high and stretches 450 metres in length. It was built as part of the London to Brighton railway line between July 1838 and July 1841, and was designed to carry trains over the River Ouse. It stands as a testament to the engineering marvels of its time, using an estimated 11 million bricks in its construction.

Restoring such an historic and architecturally significant structure poses numerous challenges, including:

- Ensuring the restoration work preserves the viaduct's heritage value and complies with Grade II listing requirements.
- Providing safe and efficient access for workers to carry out extensive brick and stonework repairs across arches 1-8 while minimising disruptions to train services.
- Ensuring the viaduct remains structurally sound during the repair process, considering its age and historical significance.

Alltask installed multiple access scaffolds and lifting frames, custom-designed to meet the specific needs of the restoration project. These structures offer secure and flexible access to workers throughout the repair process – and also ensure their protection.

The large stonework to be replaced at the top of the viaduct required heavy-duty masonry loading to the top lift of the scaffold throughout, resulting in issues with the ground bearing pressure. Collaborating closely with Octavius on the foundation designs to ensure the base stability and working closely with AMS Stonework, the team developed



a lifting solution for the 500kg stones. This involved two Niko rails installed at multiple positions to provide the safest and most ergonomic lifting and transporting of the major stonework into position.

The completion of the first phase of works, including both brick and stonework repairs on the North side of the viaduct (arches 1-8), marks a significant milestone in the restoration process.

The company works closely with external design consultants, Prime Scaffold & Structural Designs Limited, to develop temporary works designs that meet the project's unique requirements. The whole team was delighted to receive a report from independent inspectors Tagway that said: *"We would like to express our congratulations to the scaffold team at Ouse Valley Viaduct on an excellent job. The scaffold itself was very impressive and has been erected to the highest standards. Since Tagway have been established, this is the best scaffold we have had the pleasure of inspecting. We look forward to Phase 2."*

Scaffolding Insider will return to the subject of bridges in the near future as there are a number of remarkable projects ongoing. Please contact us if you would like us to feature your project in a future issue.

NEW SPEAKERS ANNOUNCED FOR SCAFFEX

The industry's new exhibition, conference and awards event, ScaffEx24, has announced the latest key industry speakers who will address conference delegates. The event will be held on Friday 29 November 2024 in the Belfast International Conference Centre and the Conference will feature industry leaders sharing their insights across four key sections: Opportunity, Meet the Buyer, Innovation, and Training and Education.

With Suzannah Nichol, Chief Executive of Build UK, already having been announced as a keynote speaker, three further distinguished speakers have been revealed:



Julio Black

Julio Black, Head of Product & Marketing, AT-PAC

Julio Black is the Head of Product & Marketing at AT-PAC, a globally recognised leader in the scaffolding and access sector. With over two decades of experience in the industry, Julio has been instrumental in driving AT-PAC's innovative strategies and product

development. His expertise spans across market analysis, product lifecycle management and brand positioning, making him a pivotal figure in advancing the scaffolding industry. At ScaffEx24, Julio will share his insights on the latest innovations shaping the future of scaffolding.



Lee Rowswell

Lee Rowswell, Group Director, GKR Scaffolding Ltd

Lee Rowswell is the Group Director of GKR Scaffolding Ltd, a prominent scaffolding company known for its commitment to safety, quality, and sustainability. Under Lee's leadership, GKR has achieved significant growth and recognition within the industry.

Lee has a wealth of experience in business development and operational excellence. At ScaffEx24, Lee will speak on the vast opportunities that scaffolding provides, highlighting the sector's potential for growth and career development.



Layher 

More Possibilities. The Scaffolding System.



Barry Neilson

Barry Neilson OBE, Chief Executive, CITB NI

Barry Neilson OBE serves as the Chief Executive of the Construction Industry Training Board for Northern Ireland (CITB NI). With a distinguished career dedicated to enhancing skills and training within the construction industry, Barry has been awarded the OBE for his

contributions. His leadership at CITB NI has been pivotal in driving initiatives that equip the workforce with essential skills. Barry will address the critical topic of scaffolding and access skills, emphasising the importance of training and education in the industry.

More speakers will be announced soon but the Conference is already shaping up to be an important event for anyone who wants to thrive in this industry and understand how it will evolve over the coming years.

The Conference, for its inaugural year, is FREE. But you must register at www.scaffex24.com

Exhibition

Starting before the Conference and continuing throughout, is the ScaffEx24 Exhibition, where you can explore the latest innovations in scaffolding and access from the UK's top suppliers and service providers to the industry. Learn about cutting-edge products and services that are shaping the future of the industry. This is your opportunity to speak to all the important players in one place.

*There are still a few spaces available for exhibitors but as Scaffolding Insider goes to press, space is 90% sold out, so please email enquiries@nasc.org.uk as soon as possible if you are interested in this unique opportunity to get in front of hundreds of scaffolding and access company decision-makers.

Ball and Awards

The NASC Annual Ball and Awards is famous throughout the industry and this year's night of celebration promises to be another spectacular event. As well as a chance to let your hair down, it is also a really important opportunity to recognise industry excellence and outstanding achievements.

We'll have more details about the Awards next issue, including some changes to the awards being presented, and an announcement about who will be hosting the evening.

With only 750 tickets available and the event being a sell-out every single year, do act fast to reserve your places. The cost of £290 +VAT per ticket drops to just £205 +VAT each for members. Go to www.scaffex24.com

TALENT SOLUTION GOES LIVE

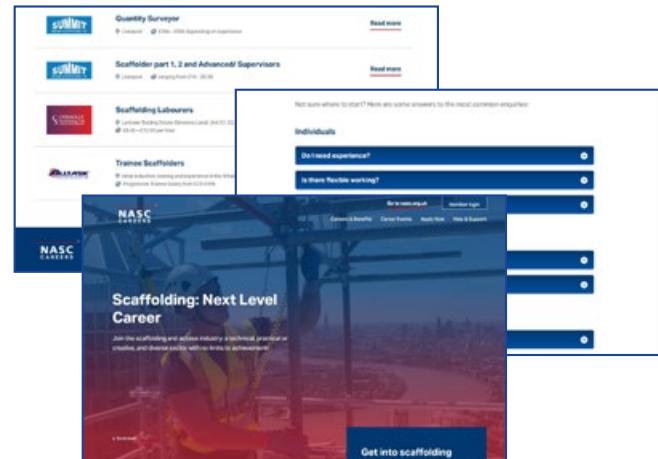
NASC's new Talent Solution portal is now live. The Talent Solution aims to completely change the recruitment landscape for scaffolding companies and potential recruits alike. The portal has its first vacancies online now, with many more to come.

NASC's Talent Solution provides a user-friendly platform for candidates to register and connect with quality employers actively seeking skilled, enthusiastic individuals.

NASC is initially targeting 3,000 users from the general public who will use the portal to learn more about the industry, its roles and vacancies. Users will be sought through targeted Google Adwords, including piggybacking searches for other trades in the broader construction sector. This is seen as a vital part of raising awareness of the scaffolding industry among those who may not know anything about it or consider it as a viable option for them to work in. NASC will also work with Indeed, Monster and other established recruitment routes.

Meanwhile, NASC also plans a range of interventions with schools and colleges to ensure scaffolding and all of its opportunities are better understood and promoted to young people.

Henry Annafi, NASC Training and Careers Manager, comments: *"This is the start of what should be the biggest shift in recruitment practices the sector has seen – but we do need NASC members to play their part. I urge all*



members to take the time to familiarise themselves with the whole portal and to work with whoever in their team is responsible for recruitment to maximise their opportunities through use of the portal.

"I'd be delighted to hear directly from members to discuss how to make the most of this opportunity."

Scan the QR Code to go straight to the portal and register your vacancies now.



Clive Dickin

SPEAK TO THE CEO

Clive Dickin, NASC CEO, is continuing with his successful run of Meet the CEO Surgeries, with the announcement of new dates in June and July. These surgeries are an opportunity to talk directly with Clive about any issues in the industry or as a NASC member – or to understand more about NASC's plans and ambitions for the coming months and years.

The next surgeries are:

- Thursday 13 June – Wrexham
- Tuesday 25 June – Newcastle
- Wednesday 26 June – Scarborough
- Wednesday 10 July – Brentwood

Go to the Events page of the website for more information and to book in.

NEW REGIONAL MEETING PROGRAMME TO BEGIN

Following a fundamental review of NASC's Regional Meeting programme by senior management, its board and council, significant changes to improve the frequency and access to the meetings have been approved. The new-style meetings begin next month and any member may come to any meeting.

The new format is designed to ensure that NASC can consistently be available to communicate with members more frequently and at a variety of venues throughout the whole of the UK.

The next five meetings are:

- Thursday 6 June, South West & South Wales Region – The Leonardo, Plymouth
- Thursday 4 July, Scotland & NI – DoubleTree by Hilton Strathclyde, Glasgow
- Tuesday 17 Sept, Northern and North Wales – Radisson Blu Manchester Airport
- Thursday 24 Oct, London and South East – PERI UK, Brentwood
- Thursday 12 Dec, Midlands – Manufacturing Technology Centre, Coventry



UK CONSTRUCTION WEEK LONDON



NASC exhibited at UK Construction Week in London at the start of May. The exhibition featured a wide range of presentations and speakers as well as a Live Demo Theatre, Skills and Training Hub, and a Recruitment Zone in addition to the large number of national and international companies exhibiting. NASC was there to advocate on behalf of the scaffolding industry and NASC members.

HR: DON'T LEAVE IT TOO LATE

"The scaffolding industry often manages well enough when it comes to HR," says Vaughan Hart, Director of construction HR specialist consultancy VH Consulting, "even if it's not quite by the book – but when something does come up, there are limited processes to fall back on. There might not be a problem for five, ten, twenty, thirty years – but when there is one, it can be a costly, even business-threatening disaster. More than ever, we are witnessing employees that often know far more about employment law than we give them credit for."



Vaughan Hart

Vaughan points out that the industry, especially at the smaller end, tends to be great at managing the job, solving problems and generally delivering the work. What it's often not so good at is the strategic thinking and foresight that can help avoid future HR disasters and improve performance and

productivity.

For those in the industry with HR responsibility, there are both immediate issues and ongoing issues to address.

Current issues

Gray Rigg, who advises NASC on Industrial Relations, picks out three matters that will have an immediate impact on scaffolding companies: the Working Rule Agreement, employment legislation changes, and a possible change of government. He says: *"Joint Councils were set up to bring together employers and trade unions to determine pay and conditions of employment for directly employed operatives and to provide a mechanism to resolve disputes. Currently the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) has eight employer 'Adherent Bodies', including NASC.*

"The CIJC delivers the Working Rule Agreement for the Construction Industry (WRA), which is reviewed each year following negotiations between employers and trade unions. An agreement for the period June 2024 to June 2025 has recently been reached and the details of revisions to pay and conditions of employment – known as a Promulgation – are imminent.

"It is fair to say that today the WRA is more a reference point for employers to use or adapt to suit their operations, than being adopted in its entirety as an employer's own terms and conditions of employment. Regarding pay, the WRA rates are regarded more as minimums than relating to actual earnings."

NASC will issue guidance to members on the latest WRA shortly.

Moving on to recent changes to family-friendly employment legislation, Gray says: *"For some years the Government has been looking to make employment more accessible for individuals with external responsibilities, including those who would be unable to work the traditional 8am-4pm or 9am-5pm hours. Legislation and the direction of travel has been to relax the requirements in favour of the individual to encourage additional employment opportunities.*

"Changes in the way work is carried out, hastened as a consequence of the pandemic – working from home, variable start and finish times, task rather than attendance focused – and the shortage of suitable recruits for certain roles provide an additional impetus.

"Of course such changes are beneficial to many individuals and businesses. However, in other business circumstances, there can be difficulties in planning and organisation of limited resources." Family-friendly changes that came into force in April include:

- **Flexible working** – from day one of employment, employees may request flexible working (previously six months' service required).
- **Maternity** – pregnant women and women on maternity leave have certain protections in the event of a redundancy situation arising: the protected period has been extended and can be for up to 18 months after the birth.
- **Paternity** – the way in which paternity leave may be taken is now more flexible and the timeframe for taking it is extended: it can be as two separate weeks and may be taken up to 52 weeks after the birth.

Finally, Gray looks ahead to a widely-anticipated change of government in the near future: *"Whilst the Labour Party has not yet decided its manifesto, it has been undertaking work in the employment area to identify proposals for change. Earlier this year 'A new deal for working people' was published as an Employment Rights Green Paper which sets out these ideas."*

Proposals include:

- The current law distinguishes three types of employment:

direct employees, the self-employed and workers (the latter a sort of halfway house between the other two); the proposal is to combine direct employees and workers, giving the same basic rights and protections to both; self-employed status would continue.

- A change to the timeframe for claiming unfair dismissal: currently two years' service is required but the proposal is to make it a day one employment right, and to remove the cap on compensation.
- It is also proposed to do away with the current three waiting days for Statutory Sick Pay, making it a day one right in employment, and extending SSP to workers and the self-employed.
- To introduce a right for those employed not to be contacted by their employer outside of working hours, and to give protection from surveillance by the employer.
- To extend the current three-month maximum period to bring most Employment Tribunal claims.
- To require anyone working regular hours for 12 weeks or more to have the right to a regular contract and to ban zero-hours contracts.

"If the above or other of the proposals in the Employment Rights Green Paper are progressed it will impact many areas of employment, industrial relations and Employment Tribunals."

NASC CEO, Clive Dickin, adds: *"It is worth noting that some of the ideas in this Green Paper may well be positioned with an eye on the forthcoming general election and there may be an element of political rhetoric involved. The route from Green Paper to White Paper to legislation is a long one. However, the proposed changes are very significant and it is important that employers take note. NASC will be working in political and governmental circles to press the case for any new legislation to balance the needs of both employee and employer."*

See <http://www.labour.org.uk/updates/stories/a-new-deal-for-working-people> for more information.

The bigger picture

Turning to the more ongoing issues for scaffolding companies, Vaughan Hart outlines the picture: *"SMEs in the industry have limited resources that they can dedicate to HR. It is often an administrator or the owner of a company who takes on the HR responsibilities but with little expertise or training. At best, they manage the situation but they just don't have the time, expertise or experience to lead the HR offer. This often means that, apart from a lack of knowledge, policies and procedures, there is often a real lack of consistency in dealing with people, which can add fuel to the fire for disgruntled employees."*

Vaughan says that in his experience, not only are most people with HR responsibilities in SMEs unaware of the complexities of employment law, but a surprising number of companies don't even have some of the basics, such as a contract of employment, company handbook, disciplinary and grievance procedures. He adds that there are a number of other areas that just don't get enough attention and urges SMEs to consider their approach to the following:

"This is just the tip of the iceberg. Any company that doesn't take HR seriously is asking for trouble."

Vaughan Hart

People Development & Training: in a smaller firm, there can be limited opportunities for promotion and growth, which can lead to good employees leaving. How can you encourage them to stay while continuing to develop and add value to the business?

Adapting to change: the sector is in a period of change and many companies are seeking different types of work in order to survive. Does your business have people with the right attitude and skills to adapt to different work, to different procurement? What is the culture of the business when it comes to embracing change? How do you change the culture of the business to adapt to future needs?

Ageing workforce: there are a lot of scaffolders who are 50+ in a very physical job and finding it hard. But they have so much knowledge, they shouldn't just be put on the scrapheap – so how do you develop and use them to the company's advantage?

Flexible working: there seems to be an expectation now regarding flexible working – how are you managing that regarding your office staff? And how are you managing any issues that arise because site workers see office staff as 'getting away with' working from home while they're out in the cold and rain? How do you ensure people feel valued and looked after and are not tempted to move to other industries where flexibility is better?

Performance management: Too many managers and owners allow staff to just drift without either party thinking about what comes next. Regular one-to-one reviews and appraisals are vital to keep both employer and employee happy and help prevent nasty surprises. If the first you hear of someone being unhappy is when they leave, you need to rethink your approach.

Not all companies can afford to have their own HR function but NASC now provides members with an HR helpline enquiries@nasc.org.uk.

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

As Scaffolding Insider was about to be published, the CIJC announced:

"The CIJC have agreed the revision to national minimum rates and allowances that will apply from Monday 24th June 2024. HMRC have agreed to the revised levels of those allowances that can be paid untaxed. Those allowances have been increase in line with the March Consumer Price index figure. The agreement this year includes a reference to an increase in the industry days holiday, from 22 days to 23 days. This is not effective until the new holiday year i.e. commencing on the 1st January 2025."

Full information is available now on the Members Only area of the NASC website.

Services & Ancillary Products Members

If you're looking for a specialist service to support your scaffolding company, check out NASC's Services & Ancillary Products members below:

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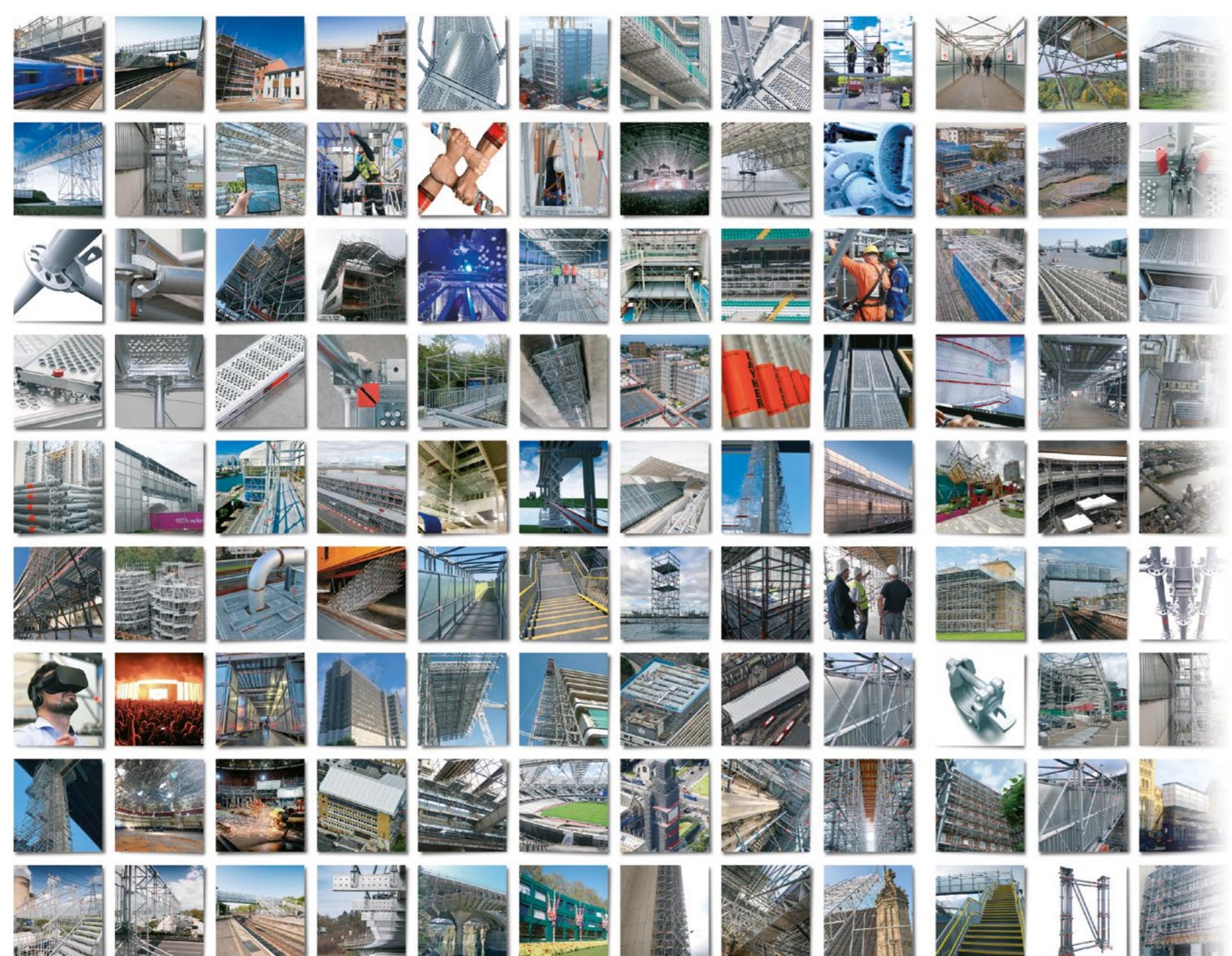
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