

Scaffolding Insider

NEWS | FEATURES | COMMERCIAL | HEALTH & SAFETY

JULY 2025

SCAFFEX 25

ScaffEx25 to be 15 times bigger than '24

NOT OPTIONAL

Why Social Media
is a must

A SECOND CHANCE

How one firm
is championing
rehabilitated offenders

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FROM THE EDITOR

Anyone working in the scaffolding sector, especially those who own or manage businesses, will know all too well that it's as important to keep the pipeline of work full as it is to keep delivering on current projects to the highest standards. A significant part of that is ensuring that your business has some kind of competitive advantage over others, a real point of difference.

One point of difference that is very evident for some companies is their use of social media. As the article on pages 15-17 suggests, using social media for business is no longer a luxury but a necessity. But few scaffolding companies appear to be doing it well, and those that do use it effectively really stand out. For this article, I spoke to a number of experts who provide really excellent advice on how you can use social media well, not only to grow your business but also to cement your relationships and help protect your company against PR disasters. With 79% of the UK population on social media now, it's critical for your business to be there too.

Another place that is critical for scaffolding businesses and employees to be is ScaffEx25. It's just a month and a half away and is shaping up to be an event which the scaffolding industry has never seen the likes of before. A huge venue, with leading suppliers able to take large spaces to show their kit, as well as using the demo area so you can see it in action. The conference programme is full of fascinating speakers and then there's the Scaffolding Excellence Awards to round everything off. You can read about all this, including the just-announced Awards shortlists, on pages 10-13. It's on 11-12 September in Manchester – I'd strongly recommend getting yourself to the free conference and exhibition as well as the star-studded Awards Dinner.

One company marking itself out as different is Shield Services Group, which has shown real commitment to taking on rehabilitated offenders in a programme designed to help them reintegrate into society and find work. This is the kind of initiative that speaks volumes for a firm's approach and marks them out as different. Read more on p18.

There's all the usual news to read, and our column this month is written by Jo Fautley of Build UK.

I hope you enjoy the issue.



Nick Campion
Editor

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DATA SHOWS EXTENT OF BSR DELAYS



The scale of delays plaguing the Building Safety Regulator's gateway approval process has been laid bare in the first set of published official figures.

Latest Government data covering the period October 2023 to March 2025 shows a rising backlog of projects held up in the lengthy process, with further applications increasing the backlog as BSR teams aren't able to process them.

It now takes an average of 36 weeks to secure gateway approval on new build projects – three times longer than the original 12-week target and longer than the 19 weeks average at the end of 2024.

The figures show 2,108 total applications submitted, with just 338 having received approval. This means billions of pounds worth of high-rise new builds and recladding schemes are stuck in limbo.

In a statement accompanying the figures, the Health & Safety Executive said: *"We acknowledge there are delays in processing applications and we continue to introduce improvements."*

"Recent recruitment activity is having a positive impact on productivity with the number of decisions doubling (month on month) overall since March. Significantly, the number of decisions made are now exceeding new applications received. Dedicated teams are now in place to process new-build and remediation applications, and we are introducing a new Innovation Unit which will focus on fast tracking new-build applications through the system."

Responsibility for the regulator is being stripped from the Health and Safety Executive and handed to a new arm's length agency under the Ministry of Housing.

SKILLS GAP THREATENS 1.5M HOMES PROMISE



Kirstie Donnelly

As the Government seeks to fulfil its promise to build 1.5 million homes by 2029, construction firms across the UK are facing severe recruitment challenges, with more than three-quarters (76 per cent) reporting difficulty in finding the skilled workers they need, according to a survey by City & Guilds.

The study, which gathered insights from employers, training providers and employees, found that 84 per cent believe the sector is grappling with critical skills shortages.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) estimates the industry will need to recruit an additional 239,300 workers by 2029 to meet demand, a figure many in the sector see as increasingly unachievable.

More than half (54 per cent) of employers say the current workforce is not equipped to deliver on the Government's housing target, with an equal number also casting doubt on the industry's ability to meet net zero housing ambitions.

Kirstie Donnelly, chief executive of City & Guilds, said: *"We can't build 1.5 million homes without the people to deliver it. We urgently need to reset how we attract, train, and upskill talent across the construction sector, with flexible routes, smarter investment, and collaboration between industry, education and Government."*

"With the Government signalling a clear intention to reduce reliance on overseas workers, investing in and nurturing skills isn't optional – it's critical."

ZERO TO LANDFILL

A Yorkshire-based manufacturer has launched a new initiative to stop end-of-life scaffold sheeting ending up in landfill.

Scaffmag reports that Industrial Textiles and Plastics (ITP) Ltd, based in Easingwold, North Yorkshire, has unveiled its Zero to Landfill programme in partnership with secure waste management specialist Avena.

The scheme allows customers to return used scaffold sheeting for environmentally responsible disposal through repurposing, remanufacturing, or energy recovery.

Under the scheme, Avena will collect scaffold sheeting from ITP's customers, transport it to dedicated facilities, and track its disposal. Customers will receive certificates of destruction and detailed reports showing the carbon savings achieved.

ITP Sales Director, Matt Thompson, added: *"Scaffold contractors and suppliers who participate in the scheme are not only helping the environment, but also gaining certified evidence of their sustainability efforts. This supports clients' own environmental policies and reporting."*



ALLOWANCES RISE

The Construction Industry Joint Council has announced minor adjustments to the Working Rule Agreement – Daily Fare and Lodging Allowances in line with the Consumer Prices Index, the main measure of inflation.

This means a 2.6% increase in non-taxed fare allowance and non-taxed subsistence (lodging) allowance, which increases to £51.97 per night.

GRENFELL DEBARMENT PAUSED

Debarment investigations into seven organisations criticised by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry have been paused to prevent any impact on criminal investigations.

The Government announced in February that it was looking to blacklist seven companies involved in the Grenfell Tower refurbishment that made a simple kitchen appliance fire turn so lethal back in 2017, resulting in 72 fatalities.

It planned to use debarment powers that had just become available to it under the Procurement Act 2023, stopping the companies getting any public contracts. The seven companies concerned are materials suppliers Arconic, Kingspan and Saint Gobain, fire engineer Exova, architect Studio E, contractor Rydon and sub-contractor Harley Facades.



PICTURE CREDIT: the-blowlup

However, it has now put that action on pause to prevent any impact on ongoing criminal investigations.

STEELMAKING TRANSFORMATION BEGINS

Construction has officially begun on one of the world's largest electric arc furnaces (EAF) in Port Talbot, Wales, a cornerstone project in the UK's move toward sustainable steel production.

Senior executives from Tata Steel, alongside UK Government ministers and leading contractors, gathered on site for the groundbreaking ceremony at the state-of-the-art facility.

The new EAF will melt UK-sourced scrap steel to produce three million tonnes of steel annually, significantly reducing reliance on traditional blast furnaces. As part of Tata Steel UK's wider decarbonisation strategy, the project also includes advanced ladle metallurgy systems and major infrastructure upgrades.

The scheme is led by principal contractor Sir Robert McAlpine. With a total investment of £1.25bn – including £500m of support from the UK Government – the transformation aims to deliver low-carbon steelmaking at scale. Once operational by the end of 2027, the EAF is expected to cut Port Talbot's carbon emissions by around 90%, the equivalent of five million tonnes of CO₂ annually, while safeguarding 5,000 UK jobs.



NEW APPEAL FROM NO FALLS FOUNDATION



As the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) releases the latest work-related fatal injuries statistics for Great Britain, the No Falls Foundation has renewed its call on industry to commit to stop falls from height and reduce the number of avoidable deaths and injuries.

The latest issue of the HSE's Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain reveals that, in the past year, 35 people have died following a fall from height at work.

To coincide with the release of the statistics, the No Falls Foundation has called on industry to make a firm commitment to reducing falls from height at work and ensure every worker goes home safely at the end of each day.

Despite advances in height safety, ongoing campaigning and increasing awareness of the risks of working at height, falls from height remain the leading cause of workplace fatalities in Great Britain.

As well as the fatalities, almost 5,000 people in Great Britain were reported as having been injured through a fall at work in 2024/25. However, the No Falls Foundation believes there is substantial under-reporting of non-fatal falls from height for all workers, particularly the self-employed, who were found to report just 12% of workplace incidents.

KEEPMOAT SEES 35% DROP IN PROFITS



Tim Beale

Keepmoat saw pre-tax profit fall by nearly 35% to £54m last year as it battled falling sales and a painfully slow planning system. Revenue dropped 12% to £764m for the year to October 2024, as completions dropped 14%.

Chief executive Tim Beale said the group's flexible

multi-tenure model and long-term partnerships helped maintain progress on site, with 847 plots delivered through bulk deals with PRS and housing association partners. Beale backed the new Government's push for faster planning reform and affordable housing targets, calling Keepmoat "perfectly aligned" to deliver more homes on brownfield and regeneration sites.

Despite the tougher market, Keepmoat expanded its forward land pipeline to over 24,400 plots, up from 23,100, representing around seven years' supply.

SAFETY RISKS HAVE INCREASED, SAYS ICE

A new review by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) has found that ageing infrastructure, increased incidents of extreme weather and squeezed budgets are all contributing to safety risks in the sector

Safety risks have increased, not decreased, in the eight years since the Grenfell Tower fire, says the ICE in a new review called Building Safeguards.

The review challenges the industry to put systems in place to ensure suitably qualified specialists perform crucial tasks. The review also outlines an action plan to address safety risk challenges and says that the institution will appoint a trustee to oversee progress and report on it annually.

The age of the UK's infrastructure, the increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events, the intensity of asset use and the increasing need to repurpose assets – rather than build new – to keep carbon emissions low, are all contributing factors.

The review's action plan includes three strands: competence; learning from failure; and culture and practice.

INDUSTRY VIEW

In this month's column, Build UK Deputy Chief Executive, Jo Fautley, writes for Scaffolding Insider about the Common Assessment Standard.

Build UK has recently published an updated version of the Common Assessment Standard, with one of the main changes being that the Building Safety section must now be completed by all companies that carry out design or building work under the Building Safety Act. This section had been advisory rather than mandatory for the first 12 months after its introduction in July 2024 to allow the industry to get up to the speed with the new requirements.

Under the Building Safety Act, anyone appointing individuals or organisations to undertake work has a duty to ensure they are competent. Organisations must demonstrate 'organisational capability', and I'm pleased to say that the Common Assessment Standard is being used by a growing list of clients and contractors across the public and private sectors to demonstrate compliance. As a result, a number of Build UK members will be specifying



Jo Fautley

that members of their supply chains must have successfully completed the Building Safety section by 1 October 2025.

More than 21,000 suppliers have now been certified against the Common Assessment Standard by the seven Recognised Assessment Bodies, and a data sharing agreement means that companies need to obtain certification only once from any of the Recognised Assessment Bodies.

The Common Assessment Standard simplifies the pre-qualification system for businesses across the supply chain, and companies who use it tell us that they'd never look back. Replacing the old system where suppliers had to meet a multitude of pre-qualification requirements at an estimated annual cost of up to £1 billion across the industry, the Common Assessment Standard means companies can now complete just one certification a year, improving efficiency and reducing duplication and cost.

The Common Assessment Standard is designed for all businesses, from the very large to the very small, so even a scaffolding microbusiness, for example, can be certified against it because the assessment standards for certain questions are applied in a proportionate way.

I would encourage anyone who wants to reduce the bureaucracy of pre-qualification to make sure they have the Common Assessment Standard. If you hold multiple certifications, you should check to see if you have the Common Assessment Standard more than once – you don't need to – and you may be able to save yourself thousands.

SCAFFEX25
MANCHESTER 11-12 SEPT

Layher 

More Possibilities. The Scaffolding System.

THE SCAFFOLDING AND ACCESS WORLD UNDER ONE ROOF.

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TO ATTEND
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SCAFFEX25

MANCHESTER CENTRAL 11-12 SEPT 2025

ScaffEx is back. With a bigger and bolder event bringing together the scaffolding and access world for a two-day exhibition and conference showcasing the latest products and innovations across the industry, ending with the **Scaffolding Excellence Awards 2025**.

The exhibition and conference are free to attend and offer an unmatched opportunity to learn and network.

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SCAFFEX25.COM

For sponsorship and exhibition opportunities contact derek.machale@nasc.org.uk

FIRST JOINT AGM REFLECTS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL YEAR

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on 12 June at the Bankside Hotel near Blackfriars in London. Present were 74 members, representing 55 member companies. The meeting, which was the first joint AGM for NASC and CISRS, heard from Clive Dickin, CEO of NASC and CISRS; and Wayne Connolly, President of NASC and Chair of CISRS.

The meeting, traditionally held toward the end of the year, had been pulled forward to June to better fit with financial reporting requirements. As Wayne Connolly explained, *"It means that at this meeting, the executive is presenting the numbers to the membership for approval, not presenting them after the accounts have already been submitted."*

In his introduction, Wayne Connolly looked back on the first six months of his Presidency and reflected on the progress made on multiple fronts, including changes in governance and the launch and development of TG30, recent developments in CISRS and the massive expansion of ScaffEx for 2025.

"This is a period of change, and change is never easy. We need to pull together to make sure these changes are effective. We need engagement from you to make sure the investment we are making brings out the best from and for our industry. I'm confident your passion for this industry will help us secure a strong future together."

Dickin presented the annual review and financial results for both NASC and CISRS, as shared in the recently published annual report. He explained that both organisations are in a period of change, with



Clive Dickin



Wayne Connolly

NASC launching ScaffEx and TG30 last year, alongside announcements of an enhanced audit.

"This is a period of change and one of massive investment in the processes and governance of the organisation. But we have also grown the membership, without any reduction in quality, and have put in place strong fiscal controls that have helped us to return a healthy surplus, despite the investment in things like TG30 and a major digitalisation programme."

Dickin also explained that there has been a review of the committee structure with larger, more inclusive committees across all areas of the business.

"Our committees sit at the heart of NASC and how we operate," he said. *"These committees are the means through which the executive and senior leadership team speak to and hear from members and the wider industry. They feed into all aspects of NASC's work, from decisions on member benefits to the details of technical and safety guidance and audits."*

Wayne Connolly added that there are currently places available on many of the NASC committees and encouraged those willing to volunteer to get involved. Anyone interested in joining a committee should email enquiries@nasc.org.uk



SCAFFEX25 REGISTRATIONS FLYING

Registrations for ScaffEx25, the global scaffolding and access industry's largest dedicated exhibition and conference, are off to a flying start.

The event, hosted by NASC, will take place at Manchester Central on 11–12 September. Early registration numbers have already surpassed total attendance at last year's event in Belfast.

Nearly 1,000 industry professionals have signed up so far, a figure NASC CEO Clive Dickin called 'encouraging'. *"I've been delighted with the response so far,"* he said. *"But we'd like to see more of the industry taking part. We want everyone there."*

Organisers say the switch to Manchester Central has

enabled exhibitors to expand significantly on their 2024 displays. Many of the sector's leading suppliers are taking larger stands and planning more elaborate showcases.

"Because the space is so much bigger at Manchester Central than we had last year, the major suppliers have been able to really bring out all their big toys," said Clive Dickin. *"Some of the early designs I've seen suggest that the final stands are going to be really impressive."*

ScaffEx25 is expected to attract scaffolding contractors, manufacturers, safety experts and stakeholders from across the UK and beyond. The event will feature product showcases, networking opportunities, and sessions on training, innovation, and industry standards.

INAUGURAL SUMMER SAFETY DAY

A sunny day in early June at the Spanset HQ in Middlewich, Cheshire was the backdrop for the inaugural NASC Summer Safety Day, a chance for members to get close to a series of hands-on safety demonstrations, covering a range of topics from SG30-compliant loading of lorries to a safe rescue at height.

Earlier in the morning, Mark Collinson, NASC Head of Technical, had presented the findings from the NASC Annual Safety Report that was released on the same day (see June's issue of Scaffolding Insider for detailed coverage of the Safety Report).



Using scaffolding rigs supplied by Layher and Eclipse Scaffolding, the safety demonstrations allowed small groups of members who took part to ask plenty of questions and pick up lots of useful tips.

Chris James, Technical Specialist at SpanSet, said: *"It was a fantastic day. I feel like everybody that came really got something out of the demonstrations. There were a lot of questions posed to the instructors and the NASC specialists as well."*

David Brown, Managing Director of IBN Scaffold Access and Past President of NASC, said *"Everyone has gained a lot of insight from today and hopefully we can all use the things we have learned today to make the industry safer."*

80 YEARS OF NASC: The 1980s & 1990s

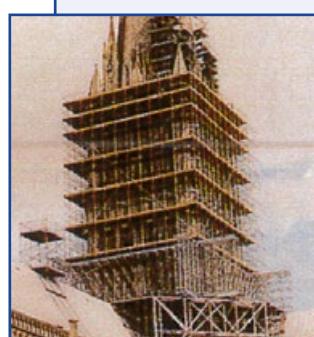
1993 saw the start of the introduction of 11 new sets of health and safety regulations over the following 18 months, marking the most radical change in health and safety legislation for more than 30 years. One area in the construction sector that was affected more than most was scaffolding. The new legislation was broad, not always practical, and did not take into account the complexity of scaffolding operations. In conjunction with the HSE, NASC began writing guidance that enabled the scaffolding industry to continue to comply with the law. In the early 90s, NASC produced a raft of guidance including SG4 - then titled SG4 Risk Assessment and Risk Control, Guidance on the Provision and Use of Safety Harnesses - and SG6 Manual Handling in the Scaffolding Industry.



In manual handling, legislation required the employer to 'eliminate so far as reasonably practicable' all manual handling activities which may affect the health and safety of employees. If these were unavoidable, they must be assessed by the employer and appropriate steps taken to reduce the risk of injury. This can be done by supplying information on the weight and centre of gravity of loads and by providing adequate training or by changing working procedures.

Meanwhile, the most fundamental changes for construction management were the CDM regulations which became law in 1994. All parties in the construction process from clients and designers through to implementation would have to play their part in integrating health and safety in all phases. New duties were placed upon clients, designers and contractors.

Remembering some of the tougher times of the 1980s, one of the few benefits of a recession is a reduction in theft. Scaffolding theft started being a problem in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1990 it was estimated that 70,000 tonnes of scaffold tubes were needed every year just to replace the tube that had reached the end of its active life, was lost or stolen. Losses around 1990 were about £50 million per year. Thieves used to steal to order, factories processed the materials and distributors passed the materials from town to town.



NASC membership grew slowly from its inception and by 1980 was only around 112 members. Vetting standards have always been rigorous, which helped keep these numbers low. In the 1980s and 1990s, all applicants for membership were scrutinised by the NASC regional committees and an official of the Association visited each applicant to inspect their workmanship and to discuss the application. All NASC members then, as now, were required to abide by a code of conduct, which set trading standards for the industry and which also required them to provide the highest possible standards of service.

AWARDS SHORTLISTS ANNOUNCED

The shortlists for the prestigious Scaffolding Excellence Awards have been announced. These awards celebrate the outstanding achievements and innovations within the scaffolding sector, recognising the exceptional talent and dedication of individuals and organisations who have made significant contributions over the past year.

James MacFadden, Senior Responsible CSA Engineer and Chair of Judges commented: *"On behalf of the judges, I extend my congratulations to all the nominees. Their hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed, and it has been a real pleasure to read these nominations. There were some remarkable people and extraordinary projects this year; my fellow judges and I often found ourselves*

commenting on the truly exceptional standard of entries.

"Many categories were extremely close and I'd like to congratulate all those who entered this year as the overall standard was incredibly high, making our decisions very difficult. I look forward to seeing the winners being announced at the Scaffolding Excellence Awards Dinner."

The shortlists are as follows:



John Stokes



Louis Sturgiss



Rhys Bennett



Ryan Wood



Advanced NI



K Scaffolding



Proplant Scaffolding



Malvern Scaffolding

Apprentice of the Year

John Stokes	- Shield Services Group
Louis Sturgiss	- GKR Scaffolding
Rhys Bennett	- JMAC Group
Ryan Wood	- Anton Scaffolding

Design of the Year

Allen & Foxworthy	- Blenheim Palace
Apex	- Exeter Cathedral
RDG	- Liverpool St Station
SRK	- Hinckley Point C

Product of the Year

Layher	- SIM2Field scaffold information modelling
Shadow Forms	- Shadow Forms software
Staht	- Staht t25 digital pull tester

Service of the Year

360 Degrees	- Consultancy services
Goldmills	- Recruitment
SMART Scaffolder	- SMART Manager platform
Leachs	- Consultancy services

**Lifetime Achievement Award –
To be announced on the night**

Project of the Year – Small

Advanced NI	- Belfast Docks
K Scaffolding	- Oxford University
Proplant Scaffolding	- The Shard
Malvern Scaffolding	- Scala Theatre, Worcester

Project of the Year – Medium

Chris Sedgeman Scaffolding	- St John's Hall, Penzance
Pickering Scaffolding	- A43 temporary roof scaffold
Rose System Scaffolding	- East Manchester mixed use development
Shield Services Group	- The Old BRI, Bristol

Project of the Year – Large

Allen & Foxworthy	- Blenheim Palace
Inner City	- Olympia, London
Brand Access Solutions	- Moxy Hotel, Bristol
ISS	- High Level Bridge, Newcastle
JR Scaffold Services	- Cockenzie Power Station, East Lothian

Project of the Year – Major

ISS	- Tyne Bridge, Newcastle
Palmers	- Liverpool St Station
GKR	- Brettenham House



ISS



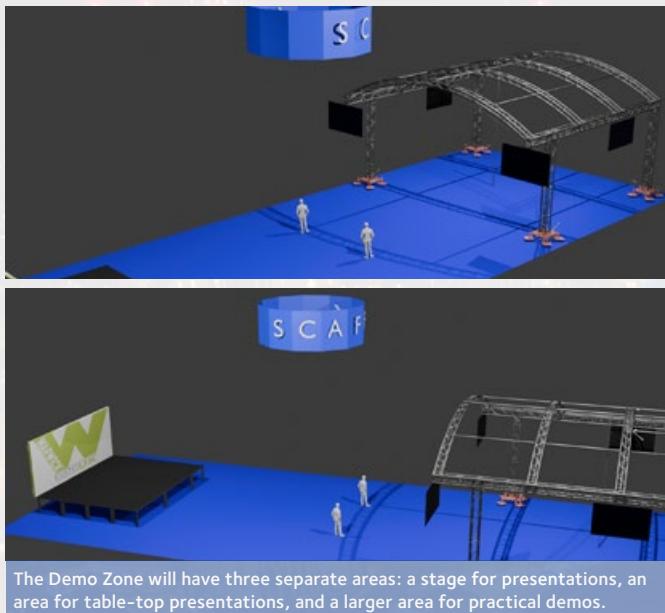
Palmers



GKR

SCAFFEX25: OFF THE SCALE

Since the successful event in Belfast in 2024, NASC has been talking about how ScaffEx25 is going to be bigger and better this year. Just what bigger and better means is becoming clearer as the event approaches. While the event will run for two days instead of one, including a two-day conference programme, the exhibition is expected to be 15 times the size of last year's.



The Demo Zone will have three separate areas: a stage for presentations, an area for table-top presentations, and a larger area for practical demos.

"Everyone who has taken one of the slots is using it to launch something brand new and never seen before. It means if you want to keep up with developments and innovations in the industry and get your hands on new products, there is no better place to be."

Derek MacHale

SCAFFEX25
MANCHESTER 11-12 SEPT

Layher 

More Possibilities. The Scaffolding System.

Event director, Derek MacHale, explains, *"This is an event on a whole different scale to last year. Just to put that in context, a couple of the bigger stands this year are pretty much the same footprint as the whole of last year's expo."*

This year also sees the addition of new features, including the Demo Zone. This is an area for exhibitors to showcase new products and services. As Derek MacHale explains, there has been a lot of interest in the Zone from exhibitors: *"I sent a note to all exhibitors offering up 30-minute slots for both days and the whole lot were snapped up within hours. There's already a waiting list."*

"What's great is that everyone who has taken one of the slots is using it to launch something brand new and never seen before. It means if you want to keep up with developments and innovations in the industry and get your hands on new products, there is no better place to be. It really is the entire industry under one roof."

Companies currently scheduled to demonstrate new products include Leach's, G-Deck, ScaffCycle, Layher, Pilosio, SMART Scaffolder, Staht and NASC itself, which will unveil the latest phase in the development of TG30.



WIN AN APPLE WATCH WORTH OVER £500

Register for ScaffEx25 before 15 August and win this fabulous Apple Watch Ultra GPS + Cellular, with a 49mm Titanium Case and Midnight Ocean Band.

Simply register to attend ScaffEx25 and you will be entered into a free prize draw. If you have already registered, you will automatically be entered into the draw. The lucky winner will be announced at the event and collect their prize from competition partner Karakorum Products on stand E2.

Terms and conditions apply: to see the terms and conditions, visit nasc.org.uk/terms-conditions





Out and about in Manchester

Manchester, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, is a city constantly reinventing itself. While you're attending ScaffEx25, maybe you'll find time to explore a little.

From the cobbled alleys of the Northern Quarter, brimming with indie shops and bold street art, to the imposing steel-and-glass towers of Spinningfields, Manchester makes clear its commitment to both heritage and modernity. The city's science and industry museum provides a thoughtful nod to its mechanical past, while the buzz of innovation at MediaCityUK that signals its forward momentum.

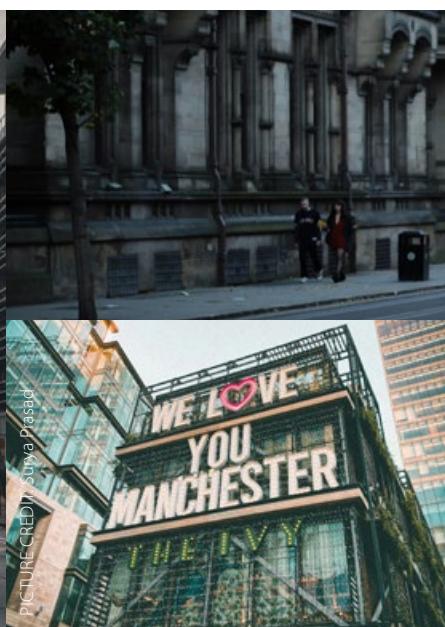
Manchester has a cosmopolitan and thriving dining scene, and its nightlife is spectacular. From traditional pubs and bars to speakeasies like Behind Closed Doors and The Washhouse, hidden behind laundrette façades and pawn shop fronts. For something more theatrical, catch a show

at the Palace Theatre or Opera House, where West End productions light up historic stages.

As night deepens, Manchester's club and live music scene comes into its own. Or maybe go for rooftop glamour: 20 Stories delivers cocktails with skyline views, and Cloud 23 at the Hilton offers a perch above the city.

By day, sightseeing is just as rich. Wander through Castlefield's Roman ruins and canal paths, or explore the gothic grandeur of John Rylands Library. The city's museums—like the Science and Industry Museum—offer immersive glimpses into Manchester's industrial past – and look out for HOME arts centre.

Of course, the main action over 11-12 September will be at Manchester Central – but if you want to make a weekend of it, you won't be short of things to do and places to go.



PICTURE CREDIT: Steven Rausell

PICTURE CREDIT: Sunya Plassard

PICTURE CREDIT: Hala Alghamri



BACKGROUND PICTURE CREDIT: Orry Verducci



Conference

Meanwhile, the two-day Conference has been built around the theme of The Future of Scaffolding and will feature an all-star line up from across the scaffolding and access sector.

The conference will be hosted by leading journalists and broadcasters, Sophie Long and Nina Hossain. Following the keynote speech on The Future of Scaffolding on Day One, there will be a section on The Future of Your Business, followed by The Future of Safety: Getting It Right When Things Go Wrong. The final section of the day will be The Future of Innovation: Using AI To Boost Your Business.

Day Two will begin with The Future of Work: The Role of Training in Recruiting And Retaining Teams, followed by The



Future Of Education And Training, and finally The Future of Procurement: The Buyer's Perspective.

Speakers are all of the highest quality, with huge industry experience to share.

Look out for more information on conference speakers and sessions in the next issue of Scaffolding Insider.





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SOCIAL MEDIA IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL

“Whether you’re a start-up scaffolding firm breaking into the market or an established company delivering multi-million-pound projects, one thing is certain: if you’re not telling your story online, someone else will – or worse, no one will.”



Sophia Gowland

So says Sophia Gowland, Director of specialist social media firm, Petite Agency. She adds: “Social media isn’t just about keeping up appearances. It’s about owning your narrative.”

It’s predicted that by 2028, over six billion people will be using social media across the globe. There’s an incredible 54.8 million people using social media in the UK today. Sophia continues: “In

construction, trust and reputation are everything. And the smartest businesses are realising that platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram and even TikTok are no longer just ‘nice to have’, they’re essential tools for shaping how your business is seen. Whether you’re recruiting, winning tenders, or preparing to scale, social media helps you stay in control of your brand.

“It starts with visibility. Showcasing your projects online isn’t just a pat on the back for the team, it gives potential clients, partners and recruits a clear view of the quality and scope of your work. When done consistently, it also

“The scaffolding firms seeing the most impact from social media aren’t chasing trends. They’re using it deliberately to attract talent, strengthen trust with clients, and stay visible in a competitive market.”

Sophia Gowland

reinforces your positioning. Why do people choose your company? Is it your innovation? Your safety record? Your people? If you’re not talking about these things, how are people supposed to know?

“Then there’s recruitment. The best candidates aren’t scrolling job boards, they’re scrolling socials. If your online presence doesn’t reflect your team culture or values, you’re missing a trick. I’ve seen scaffolding firms completely shift the calibre of their applicants just by showing more of the people behind the business.

“But perhaps most importantly, and this is something many companies don’t realise until it’s too late, your social media presence is your best insurance policy when things go wrong.

“If you ever find yourself in the midst of a PR crisis or difficult situation, delays, disputes, or something more serious – having an established, authentic voice online makes all the difference. A strong digital presence means you’re not starting from scratch when you need people to understand your side of the story. You’ve already built a community who knows what you stand for.

“Earlier this year, when one of our construction clients faced a large-scale, public crisis, we stepped in quickly to help them take control of the narrative. We worked with the team to publish a clear, honest statement addressing what happened, and then shifted the focus – highlighting the positive work, strong values, and actions taken behind the scenes. The goal wasn’t to cover it up, but to make sure one moment didn’t define the business.

"Social media can't prevent a crisis, but it can absolutely shape the way it lands."

"So whether you're a team of five or fifty, building your pipeline or preparing for a high-stakes tender, your digital presence is more than likes and LinkedIn noise. It's a business asset."

"The scaffolding firms seeing the most impact from social media aren't chasing trends. They're using it deliberately to attract talent, strengthen trust with clients, and stay visible in a competitive market."

"We work with construction businesses across the UK to help them show up online with clarity, consistency, and credibility."

"Because in this industry, reputation matters, and the best way to protect it is to own your story before anyone else does."



Laura Ray

So how do you do this? Leach's Marketing Co-ordinator Laura Ray gives her five top tips on how social media marketing can help your scaffolding business: *"For many in the scaffolding trade, 'social media' and 'marketing' can be two scary words when you've had no experience in these areas, so putting them together can feel downright terrifying. Where do you start? What do you do? Will it benefit your business?"*

"The good news is that you don't need to be a marketing expert. These top tips are designed to help guide you through the use of social media and how you can grow your scaffolding business step by step."

First: Increase Brand Awareness. Marketing isn't just about selling, it's about creating touchpoints, a meaningful connection that a customer has with your brand, from shaping a perception to building relationships and it all starts on social media through brand awareness.

"Increasing brand awareness allows your brand to be seen and recognised by your target audience. This strategy will increase the likelihood that consumers will remember you and reach out to your brand rather than competitors when it comes to making a purchasing decision."

"Posting content regularly and defining your brand's voice and identity can help create your brand's personality across all social platforms. What's your USP (Unique Selling Point)? Are you family run? Are you sustainable? Do you offer services in a larger radius? Lean into what makes you stand out from the rest."

Second: Post Content Consistently (But Quality over Quantity). Posting consistently across social platforms helps improve your algorithm ranking, which is the process by which platforms recommend your content to other users.

"The more you post, the more the algorithm recommends your content to your likely audience more frequently, increasing your chances of customer interaction."

"Consistent posting shows that your business is active, current and reliable. This ultimately builds trust and drives traffic to your social accounts and business website."

"More people are now looking up scaffolding companies on social media before deciding who to go with, so ensure your digital presence is a reflection of your ideals and customer service."

Laura Ray

"However, it's important to remember, you must prioritise quality over quantity. There's no point posting for the sake of it. Remember, your social accounts reflect your brand, and when content isn't of good quality, it doesn't reflect well."

"When it comes to scaffolding, one thing for sure is that scaffolders love seeing projects by other scaffolders. However, the general public and even some main contractors might have no idea what a "good scaffold" looks like."

"Within scaffolding, we often fall into the trap of posting what we think looks good and will impress other scaffolders. However, your social accounts are not for you. They are for your potential customers, so make sure that is at the front of your mind."

"Don't just continually post photos of scaffolds if you aren't explaining why they are good or impressive. You can try posting about happy customers, sharing information about some of your scaffolders, so if prospective customers look at your company and feel positive and that you are friendly, they may be more likely choose you."

"It's not all about photos though. Videos can have a wider reach, especially when it comes to platforms like TikTok. Again, you don't need a huge budget. Some of the most viral and successful videos on social media are zero budget videos created on a mobile phone."

"Getting your team to post or generate content is good too. Connolly Scaffolding are a fantastic example of this. Their regular photography competition allows customers to get to know their scaffolders, see projects through their eyes and portrays them as a company that care about their scaffolders."

Third: Boost Your Sales Through Ads. Advertisements are becoming more strategic in targeting their ideal customers.

"Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook allow you to target specific demographics, behaviours and locations that relate much more closely to your audience. You can reach more relevant potential customers, and even if these consumers do not convert into a sale, they still add value when it comes to brand awareness. You've made yourself known and still have a chance to convert these consumers through content and engagement."

"Adverts are a cost-effective way to reach your most relevant audience. By focusing more accurately on your ideal audience, you can optimise your ad spend, reducing your cost per acquisition."

"And you don't need a large budget. On Facebook and Instagram you can start from just £5 and take it from there."

Fourth: Customer Service and Customer Support. Let's face it, every business receives an unhappy review

or has an unsatisfied customer sometimes. Whatever the reason, it's inevitable. Social media accounts allow customers to make enquiries or raise concerns whenever they need.

"However, it also allows the brand to be responsive, nurture their customer relationships as best they can and most importantly, resolve the issue at hand.

"Remember, everything you post is public and even if someone is in the wrong, your public response should be calm and positive.

"More people are now looking up scaffolding companies on social media before deciding who to go with, so ensure your digital presence is a reflection of your ideals and customer service.

Fifth: Keep an Eye on the Competition. There are over 6,000 scaffolding companies in the UK and social media allows you to keep up to date with what's going on in the industry, keep an eye on competitors, identify what you're missing, what you can improve on, and how you can become a leader in the industry.

"Getting ahead of competitors introduces your services and brand to a wider audience but it's important to stay consistent with this. It's not just about getting ahead but staying ahead.

"You don't need a marketing degree or thousands of followers to start seeing the benefits of social media for your scaffolding business.

"By building brand awareness, posting quality content, running targeted ads, being responsive to your customers, and staying one step ahead of the competition, you create a great starting point for you to lay solid foundations for long-term growth.

"Consistency and patience are key."



Lydia Stanton

One company which has been working wonders on social media is Star Scaffolding. Lydia Stanton, Commercial Director, comments: "Our director wanted to increase the visibility of our brand. So, we began by ensuring we were confident in the brand itself — that it was consistent, recognisable, and reflected who we are. From there, we made sure

it was applied consistently across the business — on our vehicles, staff uniforms, equipment, and more — so people would begin to notice and remember it.

"We evaluated Facebook and X but determined they weren't aligned with our target market. While Facebook is effective for odd jobs and home extensions, our focus was on attracting corporate clients. We identified LinkedIn as the most suitable platform. To support this, we partnered with a marketing agency, ensuring consistent messaging that reflects our brand and values. Together, we proactively plan around upcoming industry developments and key events, so we're always prepared to provide relevant commentary.

"When it comes to content, we recognise that people connect with people. Posts about work anniversaries, individual scaffolders, and team achievements tend to resonate most. We also use our platform to highlight what

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Star

A typical Star Scaffolding LinkedIn post

"Regarding content, people interact with people. They like work anniversaries, information about individual scaffolders, achievements and so on. We also take opportunities to show how we're different, how we work with local communities and charities."

Lydia Stanton

sets us apart — how we engage with local communities and support charities — so our content goes beyond just scaffolding.

"We also began using Instagram because we have 18 apprentices, most of whom we recruited through our current scaffolders sharing posts on their own accounts. I use a lot of drone video content, as people today tend to prefer visuals over reading lengthy articles.

"Many contractors are active on LinkedIn, giving us insight into ongoing projects and potential opportunities. By engaging regularly, we can steadily build awareness. If you decide to use social media, consistency is key — you need to keep showing up and offering fresh, valuable content.

"When I first suggested using social media, I was much younger than our directors, and they were a bit hesitant. But now, two out of the three are very active online, and even the last one has started sending me content for LinkedIn. I've officially converted them! Next up in our marketing plan is TikTok — and we've already made a fantastic start."

SHIELD OFFERS A SECOND CHANCE

NASC has, for a long time, championed the training and employment by scaffolding companies of rehabilitated offenders. In an industry where good quality workers are so short, hard-working rehabilitated offenders can make outstanding scaffolders. One company who is making this happen is Shield Services Group.

In an effort to provide meaningful employment opportunities to rehabilitated offenders and support their reintegration into society, Shield Services Group, a multi-disciplinary construction company with a strong scaffolding offer, initiated the 'Second Chance' scheme. This case study explores the objectives, implementation, challenges, and outcomes of this initiative, which focuses on employing returning citizens within the company's scaffolding division.

The Second Chance scheme was launched in collaboration with HMP Leyhill, a category D prison in Gloucestershire. The primary goal of the intervention is to aid the rehabilitation of returning citizens by offering them employment opportunities ahead of their release. This initiative aligns with Shield's mission to demonstrate that individuals deserve a second chance to succeed.

Implementation

Shield Services Group engaged with key personnel within the work experience and probation teams at HMP Leyhill to onboard returning citizens. The company looks for specific criteria in candidates, including personality and work ethic, to ensure they fit well within the family-run business. Comprehensive interviews are conducted to understand candidates' journeys, their remorse, and their commitment to investing in their future.

Since the initiative's inception in 2022, Shield has consistently employed 6–8 operatives under the Second Chance scheme. Over 25 individuals have participated in the programme now, gaining skills and experience in the scaffolding industry. Many have returned to society with training, CISRS cards, and references for future employment.

Challenges and solutions

The scheme has faced several challenges, including high staff turnover due to candidates returning to their home



Shield's Feeder Road, Bristol contract.



regions or being moved to other facilities. Additionally, the stringent conditions imposed by the prison facility can lead to last-minute absences or terminations due to behavioural or licence breaches. Maintaining CISRS card requirements for NASC Contractor Membership while supporting the social value initiative has also been a challenge.

Colleagues are introduced into scaffolding in the yard in the first instance until HSE Tests and provisional CSCS cards are awarded. Due to the potentially fragile nature of these employment relationships and for the sake of protecting business interests, investment in COTS training for CISRS cards is offered within three months for the purposes of upskilling candidates who have demonstrated commitment to their own licence conditions to maintain employment.

Shield's agreement with the prison is such that the Second Chance cohort must remain within a 40 mile radius of HMP Leyhill, which is an important consideration when allocating labour resource to projects. Individuals are also subject to curfews, so their typical working hours are 7am to 4pm.

To address these challenges, Shield Services Group has implemented several solutions. The company provides a separate minibus for ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) colleagues to use, allowing them to start work earlier and earn higher wages. This demonstrates the company's faith and trust in the candidates. Shield has also developed a robust training programme to maintain CISRS card requirements and ensure the long-term success of the initiative.

Impact and Outcomes

The Second Chance scheme has had a significant impact on both the returning citizens and Shield Services Group. Many participants have expressed that working with Shield has made them feel 'like a human again'. The integration of ROTL colleagues into the workforce has improved camaraderie and morale among all employees. The scheme has also helped fill labour shortages with enthusiastic and dedicated team members.

Shield has offered full-time opportunities to several candidates on their release. Only 20% of ROTL programme candidates have accepted full-time job offers upon their release, as many understandably elect to return to their home towns. Despite this, Shield is very happy with the outcomes, knowing that their contributions to all of the individuals under this scheme have helped them gain meaningful employment and reintegrate into society.

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