



NASC[®]

NASC MANIFESTO 2026

SCAFFOLDING,
SAFETY, SKILLS AND
A STRONGER ECONOMY



IT HAS TO BE NASC.

Established in 1945, NASC is the UK's leading trade body for scaffolding and access.

Nearly 80 years later its members represent 80% of the UK scaffolding and access market by turnover and include leading contracting firms and their clients, as well as suppliers and manufacturers. Raising and maintaining safety standards remains at the heart of NASC's objectives, driving every activity it undertakes.



SETTING THE SCAFFOLDING STANDARD SINCE 1945

[NASC.ORG.UK](https://nasc.org.uk)

WELCOME

An industry that underpins growth

NASC is the UK's leading trade body for scaffolding and access. Its members contribute almost £3bn of added value to the UK economy. But far beyond that, they facilitate much of the rest of the economy. They design, erect and manage temporary structures necessary for other trades to carry out their operations in both the public and private sectors. NASC member firms supply access to work for people in construction, maintenance, renovation and adaptation of buildings and infrastructure, but also work across a range of industries from manufacturing to events, transportation to utilities and marine to aviation. Without this access, other people would not be able to do their jobs. Scaffolders are very often the first in to work on sites and the last to leave.

Other contractors rely on NASC members to provide safe and appropriate solutions to access problems. Those access needs can necessitate working 70 floors above ground, involve complex geometries or require suspension above fragile, historic remains. The designs NASC member firms create can be astonishingly sophisticated and often bespoke.

The construction industry is a major user of the services of NASC member firms, but that is far from the whole picture. Scaffolding provides safe temporary access or support for routine maintenance and inspection for a range of customers including schools, hospitals and other public buildings. They allow access to warehouses, factories, churches, oil rigs and listed buildings.

NASC members are also intrinsic to the delivery and maintenance of critical infrastructure. For instance, access and scaffolding is a key part of the transition to greener energy and the temporary structures erected by NASC member firms are fundamental to the entertainment and events sectors.

Scaffolding regularly involves complex engineering. It is higher value and higher tech than many people believe. The equipment deployed is innovative and complex, with new approaches constantly replacing traditional methods. Advanced software tools are used to design solutions, enabling better planning, more efficient and cost-effective deployment of temporary structures, the mitigation of risk and more efficient use of materials.

NASC member firms are conducting inspections with drones and using sensors to monitor hazards in real time, reducing the need for workers to be exposed to dangerous conditions.

Scaffolders are natural problem solvers and recent developments in technology and working practices have made it an increasingly skilled trade. That has been reflected in the pay the sector provides. But both official and public recognition of the changes have not kept pace. Scaffolding suffers from a lack of understanding of its economic significance, its complexity and the level of skill needed.

NASC recognises the typical image of a scaffolder is down to a small number of operators, who are not representative of the wider industry and certainly don't reflect NASC membership. In respect of these non-compliant operators, NASC supports increasing reporting, inspection and, where appropriate, prosecution. NASC members account for 80% of the sector's turnover and the sector has worked hard to transform itself over the last 40 years. It's time that transformation was recognised and for the industry to stand proud and pursue further improvements to drive ever higher standards of safety, skill and success.

This manifesto lays out eight key actions across six areas of policy. It lays out the improvements NASC hopes to see in the coming months and years.



Sarah Klieve
President, NASC

“The designs NASC member firms create can be astonishingly sophisticated and often bespoke”



EIGHT KEY ACTIONS

1. Strengthen infrastructure supply chains by protecting contractors, ensuring prompt payment and maximising value for the UK economy.

2. Reduce unnecessary employment bureaucracy while preserving flexibility and avoiding higher costs or lower employment.

3. Expand skills investment by strengthening further education capacity and promoting vocational routes across the UK.

4. Build a stronger workforce pipeline through better careers education, more work experience and targeted access to skilled overseas workers.

5. Increase HSE funding and raise awareness of what safe, compliant scaffolding looks like across the industry.

6. Promote best practice through public safety campaigns that showcase high standards and challenge poor scaffolding work.

7. Clarify building safety regulations, support the BSR and improve long-term access and fire safety standards.

8. Support efficient transport by reviewing drivers' hours rules and encouraging fleet upgrades through a scrappage scheme.

1. SUPPLY CHAIN SUPPORT

The UK has a major challenge in upgrading its infrastructure. The current government has ambitious plans to build a million new homes in this parliament, for seven new towns and for lots of new and upgraded infrastructure. Scaffolding will be essential to enabling and delivering all these ambitions. Better transport, cleaner energy and transformed public services require large-scale, complex projects. Those projects depend on modern, effective, efficient scaffolding and access. This will be essential to access hard-to-reach areas and to create temporary structures that allow safe spaces around active sites. Following construction and installation, infrastructure also requires regular maintenance, with scaffolding again providing the necessary access for many routine inspections, repairs and upgrades that ensure long-term functionality.

Different types of scaffolding and access solutions are suitable in different settings. When building in congested urban environments, modern access systems, such as narrow-width or mobile scaffolds, can be customised to fit tight spaces without causing major disruptions to traffic or pedestrians. On new, greenfield sites, the benefits of modern construction techniques, including modular builds, can only be realised with good scaffolding and access.

Getting it right first time is the key to making sure major infrastructure projects and residential construction are on time and to budget, something that is often an issue in these situations. Better project planning can deliver better value.

Action:

The Government needs to consider how supply chains on major infrastructure projects can be delivered to maximise value to the UK economy. It needs to develop protections within supply chains for contractors and sub-contractors to mitigate the risk of major changes to government projects or the collapse of major contractors.

Prompt payment remains an issue across this sector, and it is vital to ensuring that the current ecosystem of small suppliers remains viable. NASC welcomes banning of retentions in the Commercial Payments Bill and the clamp down on contractors late in paying suppliers. It also supports the good work of the Small Business Commissioner, Emma Jones, as well as the Government's response to its consultation on late payment measures.

However, as with all new legislation, we will need to keep a watchful eye out to monitor any unintended consequences.





2. SENSIBLE RESTORATION OF EMPLOYMENT LAWS

In the UK we are fortunate in the inheritance of our historic built environment. But these buildings and structures often require sensitive restoration. Modern scaffolding provides sensitive access solutions that can be tailored to the unique needs of historic structures, from cathedrals to wooden ships, avoiding damage while allowing safe restoration work.

Much the same could be said of the UK's legislative framework, where hidden complexities mean that well intentioned changes have disastrous, if-unintended, consequences.

A workforce that is reliable and productive is critical, shortages of talent and increasing bureaucracy are hampering growth and having deleterious consequences for companies abilities to operate at their optimal capacity. NASC recently published research with its member firms that confirmed the sector, along with much of the UK economy, continues to see a massive skills shortage. By some calculations, scaffolding alone faces some 40,000 shortage a year.

While some employers operate inappropriate standards, NASC with the Construction Industry Joint Council and unions has worked tirelessly to improve competence standards and employee working practices. Therefore, NASC members will be hit unfairly by recent changes and the introduction of the Employment Rights Act. This is causing concern for NASC members, adding to administrative burden and restricting freedoms at a time when agility and flexibility are paramount to surviving and thriving.

Action:

We need to see a decrease, not an increase, in bureaucracy that limits the ability of an employer to make changes when there are clear challenges. This damages the ability of the business to perform while also creating uncertainty and increased stress for employees. NASC calls on the government to consider making some light touch changes to employment legislation and warns of the danger of unintended consequences, including inflation of project costs and reduced employment rates.

3. A SKILLS-BASED ECONOMY

Those working in the scaffolding and access sector require a wide range of skills to operate successfully and safely. They must possess a strong understanding of structural engineering principles to design scaffolding systems that are safe, stable and fit for purpose. NASC produces and audits gold standard guidance, which is sought after and copied internationally. NASC also works with other global trade bodies through its leading role in the International Access and Scaffolding Association (IASA).

Individuals must also have the skills and knowledge to be able to apply the appropriate guidance and to erect a compliant design safely and effectively in all circumstances.

Many people choose scaffolding and access as a career relatively early in life. Accordingly, the industry needs to be able to access better training provision for 16 to 17-year-olds. This can prove difficult, as some major contractors can be reluctant to allow people under 18 onto sites, which are the only places they can gain the experience to progress in their careers.

NASC has developed guidance for the employment of young people, with supervision and safety at its heart. This enables contractors to provide the necessary learning opportunities with confidence. But the government needs to support Further Education (FE) to provide the infrastructure, including the necessary space and equipment, to support learners.

Over recent years Government funding has been focussed on apprenticeships. While this model works for some trades and can be applicable to scaffolding (particularly in larger firms) it is not always suitable, for either the learner or the employer, in the sector.

Action:

NASC welcomes the establishment of Skills England and the transformation of the Apprenticeships Levy into the Growth and Skills Levy which supports more routes to learning. But NASC calls on government to go further, supporting FE to ensure the capacity exists to meet the sector's needs and that vocational learning is destigmatised and actively promoted in schools.

We also call for stronger collaboration with Skills England and the devolved skills bodies, including Skills Development Scotland and the Welsh Government's Regional Skills Partnerships to ensure consistent, employer-led skills development across all four nations.



4. A NATION-WIDE APPROACH TO TRAINING

NASC supports the development of full-time courses in scaffolding for 16–18-year-olds, possibly aligned to other trades such as bricklaying. There are plenty of examples of good practice and government and other stakeholders should work to draw on them. NASC's Skills Gap Survey, published in early 2026, found there are still significant regional disparities. These need to be addressed with the participation of regional skills bodies such as Combined Authorities.

Each of the devolved nations, regions and commercial training partners need to coalesce behind a clear strategic plan, rather than the current disjointed picture.

Action:

The Department for Education should be empowered to define strategic objectives to establish a nationwide network of dedicated providers and to adequately support them financially. More widely NASC believes the education system needs to better prepare young people for the world of work and that there is a role for increased work experience in doing this. Scaffolding is a career with clear linear progression leading to excellent financial prospects. Elevating the status of the trade and growing its public recognition would help the sector to make its case to new entrants.

Government needs to be careful intervening in the labour market. There are many potential unforeseen consequences. Many of those who work in scaffolding and access value flexibility in employment, but processes that may work for companies with large HR departments may not be suitable for many smaller businesses.

While the industry would like to train more people in the UK, we must recognise there are shortages now and that, even with the best system deliverable, this is likely to remain the case in certain niches or specific regions. Therefore, scaffolding firms need to be able to bring skilled people into the country.





5. A SECTOR FOCUSED ON SAFETY

The scaffolding and access sector has a strong track record of improving health and safety at work. Once considered one of construction's more dangerous trades, a combination of strong guidance, HSE enforcement and better training and higher levels of worker competence, has meant that companies in the sector have dramatically reduced incidence of accidents. NASC's 2026 Safety Report, based on 2025 RIDDORs, showed there was only one RIDDOR for every 250,000 hours worked. The 2025 Incidence Rate of 4.07 is a world away from that of 84.03 recorded for 1975.

The accreditation and auditing of training, procedures and equipment that NASC carries out is a major reason why that fall in accidents has taken place. Another is the training and competence certification scheme CISRS, run in partnership with NASC, which certifies scaffolders' proficiency. The industry is committed to cutting accidents even further and other countries are looking to learn from its success.

NASC and the responsible scaffolders within its membership all support a strong health and safety regime with robust enforcement. This has been neglected and underfunded within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in recent years.

NASC welcomed the establishment of the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR). At the time NASC made it clear that the BSR needed continued support and investment to ensure improvements apply not only to the high-risk buildings (HRBs) defined by the Building Safety Act (BSA), but also to the wider UK building stock.

But it became increasingly clear that the questions asked of those responsible for building were not applicable to scaffolding. NASC was delighted when the Government responded to these concerns by making it clear that scaffolding and access are temporary works and fall outside the scope of the BSA. NASC will continue to work with Build UK and others to see the Common Assessment Standard updated to reflect this change.

Action:

NASC would support measures to improve the HSE's funding, as well as measures to promote to both the industry and the public what good, safe scaffolding looks like.

Action:

NASC would like to see a public-facing communications campaign highlighting some of the worst examples of bad practice.

Action:

More work is needed to ensure safe and effective regulation of permanent features that might enable the more effective periodic re-erection of temporary structures throughout the life of a building (for example, tying on points that are integral to a building's structure).

While scaffolding and access are outside the scope of the the BSA, the BSR must be supported and resourced to ensure the wider UK building stock benefits. While temporary structures were not directly involved in the fire at Grenfell Tower, NASC continues to revise and circulate updated fire safety guidance, recognising the need for the construction and building maintenance sectors to learn from the tragedy.



6. SCAFFOLDING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Scaffolding and access are critical components of the supply chain, essential to delivering a sustainable energy and infrastructure transition. NASC members provide the access required for the construction and maintenance of renewable energy systems, including wind power and the nuclear sector. Member firms also play a key role in retrofitting energy-efficient technologies within existing building stock and supporting works to improve overall building performance.

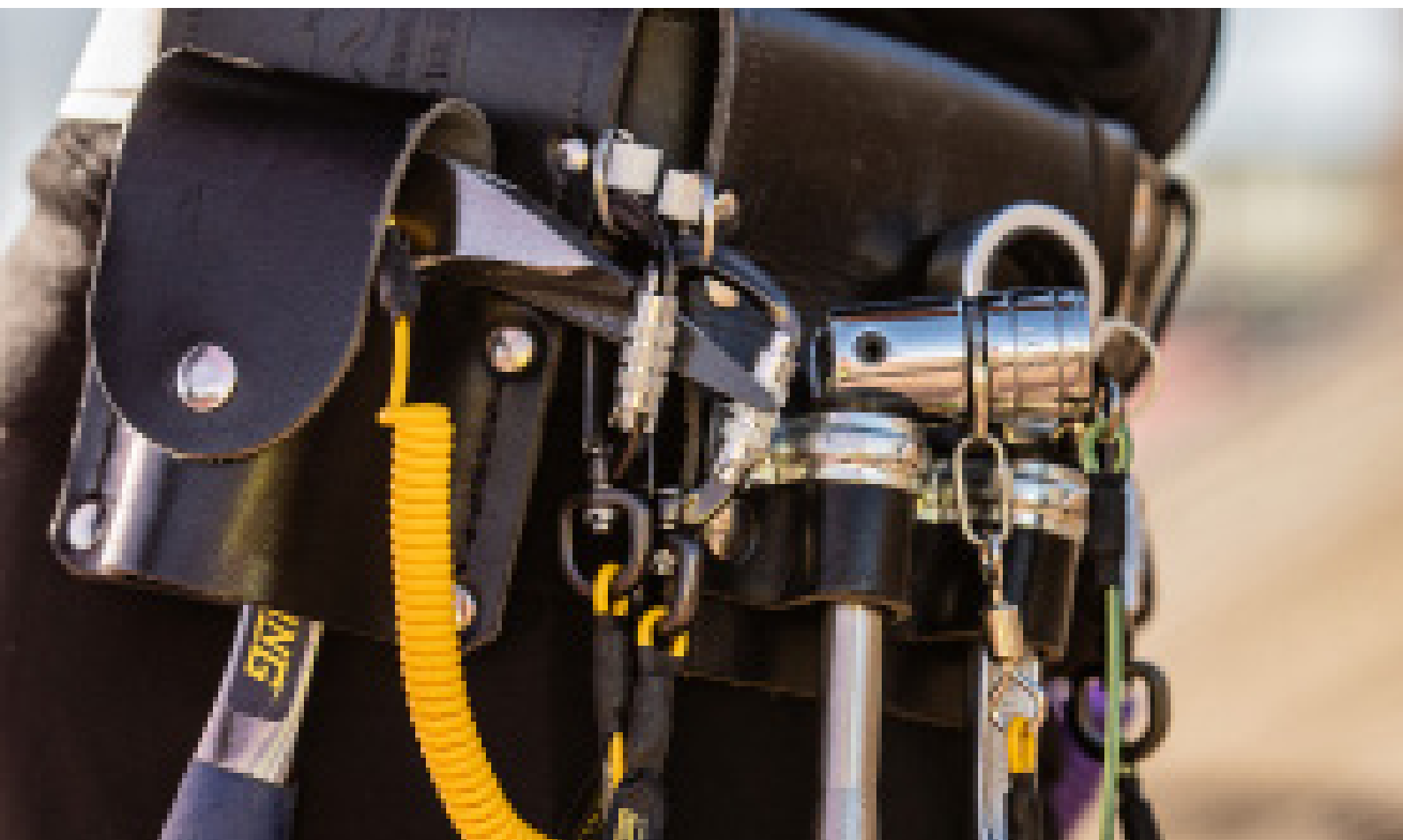
NASC members are tackling their own carbon footprint, too. Most scaffolding components are reusable and, at end of life, recyclable. By using innovative design and construction techniques, scaffolding can minimise waste, save materials and reduce the environmental impact of construction projects. Furthermore, by training the workforce in the latest sustainability technologies and techniques, we can ensure that our industry remains at the forefront of the transition to a low-carbon economy. From the use of lightweight materials to the implementation of modular and reusable scaffolding systems, NASC members are harnessing the power of innovation to build a greener, more sustainable future for generations to come.

Action:

The nature and location of scaffolding work means that the transportation of materials is a fundamental issue for operators. It is essential that scaffolders can transport themselves and their equipment using a safe and efficient fleet of vehicles. Most scaffolders work within their local communities and seldom travel long distances; therefore, the application of drivers' hours rules under Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 should not treat them in the same way as long-haul HGV drivers. The Government should also consider introducing a scrappage scheme to encourage companies to upgrade their fleets and help meet net-zero goals.

CONCLUSION

NASC is committed to making the scaffolding and access industry more effective and safer to work in, as well as more efficient, so member firms deliver what their clients and the wider economy need. NASC understands how important it is that member firms can be relied on to get it right, in full, first time. Only by working with partners in industry, government and education can we secure the competitive, growth unlocking, advantages that a thoroughly modernised sector could offer. We at NASC, and our members, want to do just that.





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