

Scaffolding Insider

THE VOICE OF SCAFFOLDING AND ACCESS

MAY 2026

NO SPACE? NO PROBLEM

Live sites in dense urban environments

A GIFT TO HMRC

Plan now to avoid inheritance disaster

A PERFECT STORM

Economic climate brings tough challenges

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FROM THE EDITOR

You'll probably have been feeling the pinch in recent months and this issue we look at how the scaffolding sector has been hit by something of a perfect storm recently, which had led to tough trading conditions thanks to an assault on the bottom line from numerous directions (see pages 8-9). When I spoke to a scaffolding contractor and to NASC's CEO about the issue, they mentioned factors such as National Insurance, the National Living Wage, National Minimum Wage, national and global economic headwinds, diesel costs, the Building Safety Regulator, the CITB... There is a lot going on right now, and marking yourself out as a high-quality operator through NASC membership is an important weapon in the armoury as contractors work hard to maintain the bottom line.

Another financially-focused article comes on pages 10-11, where we look at the issue of Inheritance Tax with the help of experts Arbuthnot, Latham & Co. I know it would be an easy one to skip past but I strongly recommend you take a look – too many companies end up going under because a simple lack of planning means HMRC rather than the next generation of family or colleagues inherits the bulk of the business's worth on the death of the owner.

Then we have some excellent case studies for you to enjoy, this time looking at projects where there is restricted space and a live environment – and a huge amount of expertise and innovation required. In the feature on pages 13-16, we look at four standout scaffolding projects delivered against the demands of dense urban environments. From a large-scale recladding scheme on a live city-centre building, to a heritage redevelopment on a busy riverside street, the transformation of a historic theatre within a landlocked urban footprint, and a busy hotel in the heart of a city.

You'll have read about the Work Experience Pledge in the pages of this magazine before, and this month, on page 19, we have an example of a company that has really picked it up and run with it. Not only has Lee Marley Group offered work experience but it has taken the opportunity to recruit new scaffolders in the process. If the Work Experience Pledge is something you've engaged in, please feel free to email me and let me know.

Meanwhile, there's lots happening at NASC, as always (see pages 4-5) – including the excellent and important Safety Day on 10 June, and the launch of the Scaffolding Excellence Awards. Entries are now open: do enter. There really is nothing to lose and much to gain.

I hope you enjoy the issue.



Nick Campion
Editor

CONTENTS

From the Editor	3
NASC News	4
Industry News Round-up	6
Industry View: Sarah Bolton	7
Feature: Squeezed at Every Level	8
Feature: Inheritance Tax	10
Case Study: No Space? No Problem	13
Training & Education	19

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Courtesy of Inner City Scaffolding.

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SCAFFOLDING EXCELLENCE AWARDS: ENTER NOW!

Entries are now open for the 2026 Scaffolding Excellence Awards, with NASC members invited to showcase the projects, people and innovations driving standards ever higher across the scaffolding and access sector.

Returning with the same nine categories as last year, the awards celebrate excellence in areas including design, projects, products and workforce development.

Dr James MacFadden, Senior Responsible CSA Engineer at Sellafield and returning chair of the judging panel, said the 2025 awards demonstrated ‘brilliant examples of innovation, project delivery, leadership and collaboration across the sector’, adding that he is looking forward to seeing the industry raise the bar again in 2026.

Last year’s awards highlighted the growing quality and ambition of entries across the industry. Allen & Foxworthy’s ‘Beast of Blenheim’ restoration project claimed both Design of the Year and Large Project of the Year, with judges praising its ‘innovation, creativity and problem-solving’.



Allen & Foxworthy - Design and Large Project Award winners 2025

Winners of the 2026 awards will be announced during a gala evening in Manchester on 11 September, hosted by comedian and broadcaster Dara Ó Briain.

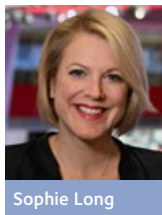
To enter, log into the members’ area and search Awards. Entries close on 4 June.



Dara Ó Briain

SCAFFEX26 CONFERENCE: SAFETY, SKILLS AND SUCCESS

ScaffEx26, sponsored by Layher, is shaping up to be the biggest and best event the sector has ever seen, bringing together the entire scaffolding and access supply chain for two days in Manchester on 10 and 11 September. Alongside the exhibition, which this year showcases a wider variety of systems, equipment and technology than ever, the Conference programme, which will be hosted once again by journalist Sophie Long, looks set to be the strongest yet.



Sophie Long

A practical focus

Conference producer, Tracy Paul, explains that the focus has been on delivering genuinely practical takeaways for all delegates. *“The programme has been built around the real issues scaffolders and business owners are dealing with every day. Whether that’s winning work, managing cash flow, recruiting and retaining labour, improving safety standards or adapting to new technology, the sessions are designed to give delegates something useful to take back to site or the office.”*

One example of this practical focus is that throughout the two days there will be in-depth sessions looking at award-winning scaffolding projects, including the Manchester Town Hall scheme delivered by BrandSafway. These sessions will explore the decisions, planning and problem-solving behind complex projects. The emphasis will be firmly on practical lessons and transferable ideas that can improve future projects and help companies win more prestigious contracts.

Asking hard questions

An opening discussion will tackle the biggest questions

facing contractors, clients and suppliers.

This Question Time-style session will look at some of the tougher questions including a growing disconnect between contractors, clients, suppliers and Government. The panel of industry experts includes voices from all parts of the supply chain, including Richard Beresford from the National Federation of Builders; PHD Access Managing Director, Danny Dwyer; Altrad UK Senior Vice President HSE, Chris Abbey; and Rob Wright, Director of Group Health, Safety & Environment, at Lindum Group.



Danny Dwyer

Topics will include fair payment, contract terms, workforce pressures and how scaffolding firms can build stronger relationships with clients. This valuable session will highlight the commercial realities of staying profitable in a difficult market. Delegates will come away with a better understanding of what clients want, how suppliers see the market and what Government priorities could mean for future work opportunities.

What no-one tells you

Another session is called What Nobody Tells You About Starting Your Own Scaffolding Firm and brings together a group who have all built a business from the ground up.

James Brierley of Rose System Scaffolding will give what he calls *“An honest and practical look at the pressures, pitfalls and opportunities involved in launching a scaffolding business”*.

Lee Marley will speak about scaling a company and the lessons learned along the way. Meanwhile, KAS Scaffolding



James Brierley

directors, Shane Wood and Adam Millgate, will offer perspectives on how to cope with the pressures that come from rapid growth.

For smaller contractors or scaffolders thinking about going out on their own, this session will offer insights on issues not often discussed, including managing cash flow, dealing with contracts, building a successful culture and surviving difficult periods.

Coping with a talent crisis

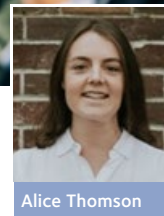
Another key focus for the conference is workforce development with a session looking at The Talent Crisis and Why You Need a Blend of Youth and Experience. It brings together CITB, NASC, major employers and training specialists to examine how scaffolding can attract and retain workers.

The focus here will be on effective ways to widen recruitment beyond traditional routes. R.A.S Scaffolding's Ashley Smith will discuss engagement with ex-offenders, veterans and people at risk of gang involvement.

Innovation and technology are transforming how scaffolders learn and there will be a session on how blended learning, immersive technology and digital delivery are changing workforce development. The balance between technology and hands-on learning will become increasingly important as training providers modernise delivery methods.

Safety and hidden risks

Another vital aspect of the conference is safety. Hiding in Plain Sight – The Hidden Risks of Getting It Wrong, focuses on fire safety, dust exposure and contamination risks.



Alice Thomson

With dust and silica getting growing scrutiny as part of the occupational health debate in construction, former HSE inspector Matt Greenly will warn delegates not to underestimate dust simply because it is often invisible. Scaffolders drilling holes for ties may only create small amounts of dust each day, but repeated exposure can still become a serious long-term health issue.

Alice Thomson from 4-Rail Services will add the occupational hygiene perspective, explaining how dust and noise monitoring works in practice and why hearing protection remains essential around impact tools and guns.

For anyone involved in scaffolding, whether on the tools, running an office, managing contracts or running a business, ScaffEx26 will set a new benchmark for being where the industry gathers to discuss where it goes next.

Registration for ScaffEx26 is now live and members and non-members alike can get their FREE TICKET TODAY by going to <https://nasc.org.uk/resource/scaffex26-visitor-registration-now-open.html>

CRUCIAL PRACTICAL GUIDANCE ON NASC SAFETY DAY

The NASC Safety Day 2026 is on Wednesday 10 June at Construction College Midlands in Birmingham. The day will once again feature a series of demonstrations and interactive workshops focused on safe working practices. As part of the event, the 2026 Safety Report will be launched alongside the new TG4 User Guide and Poster.

1. SG4 Preventing Falls in Scaffolding Operations – Demonstration & Focus Group

Get involved with the SG4 update. Alan Harris, Chair of NASC's H&S Committee, is inviting industry feedback on the current SG4 management document and user guide. The session will include a system scaffolding demonstration followed by an interactive segment, giving you the opportunity to contribute views, raise issues, and help shape the next revision of SG4.

2. SG19 A Guide to Formulating a Rescue Plan – Demonstration & Focus Group

This workshop will feature a practical manual handling rescue demonstration using a training dummy. The session will explore the pros and cons of manual handling and how that sits alongside other assisted rescue methods. This interactive discussion will help attendees refine their strategies on effective rescue planning.

3. Anchor Tie Testing Demonstration, in line with TG4 Anchorage Systems for Scaffolding

This practical demonstration will focus on scaffolding tie testing in line with the TG4 Anchorage Systems for Scaffolding management document, and the very recently

issued TG4 User Guide and Poster. The session will provide attendees with a clear understanding of best practice approaches to testing, verifying anchor performance and compliance.

4. Cladding of Scaffolds – Sheeting & Technical Discussion

This session will explore the principles and challenges of scaffold cladding, with a particular focus on fire retardant sheeting. It will combine a classroom-based presentation and open technical discussion on differences of opinion between ITP and the NASC Technical Committee regarding sheeting approaches detailed in TG27.

5. Safe loading of Access & Scaffolding Lorries Demonstration, in line with SG30

This practical session will focus on the safe loading and securing of loads on lorries, in line with SG30 Management of Road Transport. Delivered by industry specialists from SpanSet, the session will combine live demonstration with further detailed discussion.

Find out more and sign up here: <https://nasc.org.uk/ems-event-calendar/nasc-safety-day-2026.html>

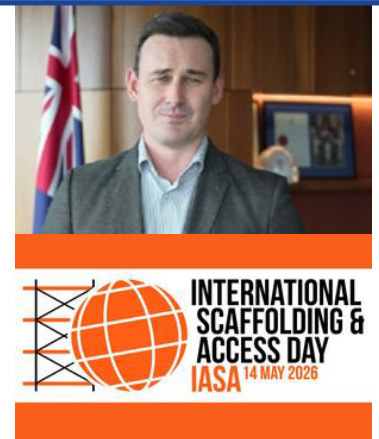
GLOBAL SCAFFOLDING SECTOR MARKS INAUGURAL INTERNATIONAL SCAFFOLDING & ACCESS DAY

The global scaffolding and access community came together on 14 May 2026 to celebrate the inaugural International Scaffolding & Access Day, a new annual event created by the International Access & Scaffolding Association (IASA) to recognise the people, skills and technical and safety standards that underpin work at height.

With the theme *“Recognising the industry. Supporting its people. Shaping its future,”* the day highlighted five major challenges facing the sector: improving public image, developing global talent, driving innovation, strengthening compliance and standardising training.

NASC urged UK firms to share stories and images celebrating their teams, which they duly did, with widespread coverage across social media. FASET, representing fall prevention specialists, used the day to spotlight safe systems of work and the professionalism of those working at height. Scaffolding Association Australia were able to secure the support of Queensland’s Building Minister, Sam O’Connor MP, who offered his strong support and posted a video in support of the day and the industry.

Social media posts from the UK and across the world, including the US, Australia and Malaysia, marked the day with posts, videos, team shout outs and project showcases. NASC’s CEO Clive Dickin shared a letter of support sent on behalf of UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, recognising the industry’s contribution.



KEY NEW LEGISLATION IN THE KING’S SPEECH



PICTURE CREDIT: Neo Bottcher

On 13 May, the King’s Speech set out a range of new Bills to facilitate the construction of infrastructure, new social housing and speed up payments in the supply chain. Key elements include:

The Small Business Protections (Late Payments) Bill, which will ban the practice of deducting and withholding retention payments under construction contracts. The Government is consulting on its implementation.

A new 60-day cap on payment terms on all large firms when paying smaller suppliers. New mandatory interest on late payments will also be introduced, with a requirement for all commercial contracts to include statutory interest set at 8% above the Bank of England base rate.

The Remediation Bill, which will see laws to require landlords of buildings 18m high, or more, with unsafe cladding to complete remediation by the end of 2029. The law will also set a 2031 cladding remediation deadline for owners of buildings 11-18m in height. Those failing to comply face unlimited fines or imprisonment.

The Bill will include measures to make construction product manufacturers pay towards fixing the problem they caused.

KING’S AWARD FOR LEE MARLEY GROUP

Lee Marley Group, a NASC member, has been awarded the King’s Award for Enterprise: Promoting Opportunity 2026.

The Award, one of the UK’s most prestigious business honours, recognises the company’s apprenticeship and graduate programmes, designed to provide local people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to learn a skilled trade and raise their economic aspirations. Focusing on recruiting local talent where their projects are built, Lee Marley Group creates a genuine pathway into the construction industry for disenfranchised communities, offering paid employment and training opportunities from day one.

The Kings Award follows a period of recognition for Lee Marley Group’s dedication to excellence after previously receiving the Princess Royal Training Award in 2021 and 2024 and being named 2025 recipients of the Association of Brickwork Contractors Commitment to Training and Development Award.



UPGRADE FOR CSCS SMART CHECK

The card verification platform, CSCS Smart Check, has been upgraded to return a greater range of information to employers and industry.



Smart Check’s latest iteration now includes:

- GPS coordinates identifying where the card was read.
- Site ID or name identifying the location of the site.
- Read reason, indicating whether the check was a pre-induction, induction, re-induction, routine check, site entry, or other purpose.

The Lighthouse Charity is this year marking 70 years of supporting the construction community emotionally, physically and financially. This month, Sarah Bolton, CEO of the charity, calls for a change in the way we look at mental health in construction.



This month, Mental Health Awareness Week shone a useful spotlight on wellbeing in construction, but the real test is what happens when the campaign banners come down. In my view, if we want lasting change, we have to stop treating mental health as a seasonal conversation and start treating it with the same seriousness and consistency as physical safety.

Construction is a tough environment. Tight deadlines, long hours, physically demanding roles and ongoing uncertainty can all take their toll. The sector values resilience, pace and problem-solving, and rightly so, but those same strengths can sometimes make it harder for people to admit they are struggling. Too often, people feel they must keep going until they hit crisis point.

At Lighthouse, we see that reality every day. Last year, we saw a 17% increase in families reaching out for help and delivered £6.3m in charitable support. Fifty-nine per cent of that support addressed an element of poor mental health, and we funded more than 8,700 counselling sessions. Those figures are rising again in 2026.

That is a sobering picture, but it also tells us something encouraging: more people are beginning to ask for help. That matters. An increase in demand is not simply a sign of worsening problems; it is also evidence that stigma can be reduced when support is visible, credible and easy to access.

For me, the answer starts with culture. We need to normalise the idea that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. That does not happen through slogans alone. It happens when people at every level, from the gate to the boardroom, make it clear that there is no judgement in saying, 'I need some help'. Leadership in mental wellbeing is not reserved for managers; it is everyone's responsibility.

That is why visibility matters so much. Our #MakeItVisible

initiative reached 677 sites across the UK and Ireland last year, and one of the strongest drivers of engagement is authenticity. When someone shares their own lived experience and says, 'I've been where you are and there is help available', it cuts through in a way posters and policies rarely can.

And we have to be honest about what works. As someone said on a recent webinar, it is not just about fruit baskets in the break room. It is about creating a psychologically safe environment where people can speak openly, be heard and know that support will follow. This cannot be a one-off toolbox talk or a line in an induction. We would never relax our standards on physical safety after a few weeks, so we should not do it with mental wellbeing either.

Early intervention is important. Too many people seek help only when they have reached crisis point, when the issue may have started with something as ordinary as a bill they cannot pay. We know that financial, physical and emotional wellbeing are closely linked, which is why support has to be practical, human and tailored to each person's journey.

Looking ahead, I believe the industry should be far more ambitious. We need better mental health literacy from school through to apprenticeships and into working life. I would also like to see mental health first aid treated with the same seriousness as physical first aid: not as a tick-box exercise, but as a core capability delivered by relatable, approachable people trained to spot the signs that someone is struggling.

Real change rarely comes from one big gesture. It comes from small choices repeated over time.

Construction is an extraordinary industry, but if we want it to be sustainable, productive and genuinely safe, mental wellbeing has to become part of the everyday standard, not the exception.

SQUEEZED AT EVERY LEVEL

Multiple pressures hitting the scaffolding sector

The UK scaffolding sector is facing some of its toughest trading conditions in years, caught between rising costs, tighter regulation and uneven demand. For many contractors, the challenge is no longer simply winning work but preserving margins in a business that has become more expensive, more complex and more cash-hungry to run.

Labour remains the most persistent pressure point. Successive rises in the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage, combined with higher employer National Insurance contributions, have increased payroll costs across construction. Scaffolding wages are generally above the statutory minimum, but increases at the lower end of



Matthew Cousins

the labour market still push up expectations throughout the workforce. As Matthew Cousins, Commercial Director at Apex Scaffolding and chair of NASC's Public Affairs and ESG Committee, puts it: *"It is tough. It is becoming less and less attractive to employ people because it is increasingly expensive to do so. We have only just got used to the National Insurance rise and recovered from it. We don't have anyone on the minimum wage, and I would be surprised if many scaffolding firms do, so that may be less impactful on our industry directly - but many companies will have apprentices and those wage costs will rise as well."*



Clive Dickin

In practice, cost inflation travels well beyond the workers actually paid at the statutory minimum because every increase

reshapes pay expectations and squeezes margins across the labour structure.

The 2025 rise in employer National Insurance contributions added real strain. In competitive tendering, many contractors have little room to re-price once a job is secured, leaving them to absorb increases or try to claw back savings elsewhere. Clive Dickin, chief executive of NASC, says the hit has been severe: *"The Government has an ambitious expenditure plan, which is positive for public services of course, but that has to be matched by tax income, and businesses have seen substantial increases as a result. Large contractors have taken six-figure hits to their bottom line, reducing their ability to invest for the future."*

Even when workloads remain steady, businesses can still find themselves less able to recruit, train or modernise because more cash is being diverted into fixed employment costs.



PICTURE CREDIT: Engin Akyurt

Fuel is another major concern for scaffolding businesses, which depend on transport fleets, HGVs and constant movement between depots and sites. The price of diesel remains historically expensive and volatile. For contractors pricing major projects months in advance, that volatility can quickly erode already thin margins. Matthew Cousins says this is especially difficult on long-lead schemes: *"Fuel is an issue because it is so unpredictable. When we win large projects that start in 12 months' time, fuel might be 30p a litre cheaper when we quoted than when the job actually begins. It is difficult to go back and pass on every additional cost that was not allowed for. At the moment we are managing to absorb it, but margins are certainly being squeezed."*

Alongside cost inflation, scaffolding firms are working within a regulatory regime that has become far more demanding since Grenfell. The Building Safety Regulator and Gateway process have introduced greater scrutiny on higher-risk and complex projects. Most of the industry accepts the need for stronger oversight, but many contractors say approval delays and added evidential requirements are slowing project starts and creating uncertainty in programme planning.



“We have survived other setbacks, including recessions, and there is always a way through. We are lucky that scaffolding is one of those trades people will always need, but everyone is having to batten down the hatches.”

Matthew Cousins

Clive Dickin adds: *“The Building Safety Regulator is presenting a real challenge. Projects are being won and then blocked because of delays, especially at Gateway Two. I know one contractor with £8 million of projects waiting, which is around a quarter of its turnover. That is unsustainable.”* While reforms and a growth in capacity eased the flow a little towards the end of last year, it seems like familiar bottlenecks are growing again.

Of course, this matters acutely in scaffolding because costs are often incurred early. Labour, equipment and transport have to be mobilised before payment arrives, so delays elsewhere in the chain can quickly turn into working-capital pressure for specialist contractors. For businesses already dealing with higher payroll, fuel and compliance costs, a delayed start can turn a healthy-looking order book into a financing problem.

Insurance and compliance costs are climbing too. Insurers remain cautious about risk across construction, particularly for work at height, and premiums have risen accordingly. Meanwhile, companies must keep investing in training, inspections and competence management to satisfy increasingly stringent expectations around safety.

Matthew Cousins says changes to CITB training funding have made that harder: *“Funding is now paid on completion rather than in advance, so whereas previously you could have money to help cover the cost of training and having people away from site, now you may have to wait many months before you get anything back.”*

“There are immediate costs in the process, and there is always the risk that someone does not finish the training or leaves the business. Then you are left with the cost and cannot recover it.”

Demand across the construction market is also uneven. Housebuilding has remained under pressure as developers wrestle with viability issues, planning delays, regulatory costs and hesitant buyer demand. Clive Dickin says the wider backdrop is weak: *“The UK economy is stagnating and there are substantial headwinds confronting scaffolding contractors at the moment. Despite the Government’s ambition, housebuilding is slowing in terms of investment, especially in the private sector.”* He also points to clear differences between sectors and regions: *“There is regional variation, of course. Certain parts of the country and certain sectors are thriving while others are not. Big infrastructure projects, the petrochemical industry and the nuclear industry are all busy.”* This means contractors tied closely



PICTURE CREDIT: AXP photography

to residential development are finding that pipelines have become less reliable, while others working in infrastructure, industrial maintenance or energy-related work are seeing steadier demand and stronger order books.

Overlaying all of this is a persistent skills shortage. The recent NASC Skills Gap Report warned that the sector could face around 40,000 vacancies when retirements, staff turnover and future demand are taken into account, with more than half of member firms already carrying at least one vacancy. However, all of the elements outlined above are making it very hard to employ more people and therefore close that gap.

The result is a difficult balancing act. Contractors are being asked to maintain high standards, invest in competence and absorb more risk, while clients remain highly price-sensitive and procurement decisions are often driven by cost. As Matthew Cousins says, *“Everything just feels like hard work now. The job is the same, but clients are having to think harder about how they specify suppliers, and price is becoming a major issue. If they can get a decent job for 10% less, they are likely to take it.”*

Yet he also argues the sector is used to surviving tough cycles: *“We have survived other setbacks, including recessions, and there is always a way through. We are lucky that scaffolding is one of those trades people will always need, but everyone is having to batten down the hatches.”* For NASC members, he maintains, accreditation still matters because there remain enough clients who value it as a mark of quality. But unless project flow improves and regulatory processes become more predictable, pressure on the scaffolding sector is likely to remain intense through the year ahead.

INHERITANCE TAX: WHY YOU MUST PLAN NOW

YOU BUILT THE BUSINESS. DON'T LET THE TAXMAN TAKE IT

Imagine this: you spend decades building a successful scaffolding firm – with steady contracts, loyal clients and a reputation earned through years of hard work. Then, unexpectedly, your life is cut short...

Your family, still coming to terms with their loss, assume the business will provide a degree of financial security. On paper, it certainly appears to: the company is valuable, with equipment, contracts and a long trading history.

Within months, an inheritance tax bill arrives. The business is asset-rich but cash-poor. There is no cash set aside to meet the liability and no plan in place to manage it. What follows is a familiar pattern across the country. Contracts begin to slip as management attention fragments. Equipment is sold at speed, often at a discount. Pressure builds, options narrow and the business that took a lifetime to build starts to unravel and ultimately fails.

In the end, a significant portion of that life's work benefits HMRC rather than your family or colleagues.

Stories like this are becoming increasingly common in the new tax landscape. Banking firm Arbuthnot Latham says this is a scenario they see often enough to recognise the warning signs. The lesson is not simply about tax. It is about preparedness. With earlier planning, the picture could have looked very different – reliefs structured appropriately, ownership reviewed, or funds set aside specifically to meet potential liabilities. And the tax bill could have been managed in a way that does not force the dismantling of a business under pressure.

Why this matters now

Inheritance tax planning is often something business owners intended to deal with later. The priority is on the now, keeping projects moving, managing cashflow, investing in equipment and looking after teams. Planning for something that feels far off can easily slip down the list.

This article is not about financial complexity. It is about prompting timely, practical action before decisions are taken out of your hands.

The risk of doing nothing

Choosing not to plan is still a decision – but often an expensive one. Without a clear plan in place, tax rules – not business owners – decide the outcome. On death, HMRC looks at the estate as it stands on that day. There is no opportunity to restructure, move assets or reconsider succession.



Paul Reidy



ARBUTHNOT LATHAM

Bankers since 1833

The typical consequences of late or absent planning are:

- A far larger proportion of wealth lost to inheritance tax than expected
- Urgency to secure short-term liquidity to cover the tax bill, whether this is a loan or more often selling assets, or even whole businesses, at speed to fund tax bills
- Uncertainty, stress and difficult decisions for family members at an already emotional time.

Perhaps most importantly, control is lost. Instead of deciding who benefits from years of effort – children, spouses or the next generation in the business – outcomes are dictated by statute.

As Paul Reidy, Director of Construction Services at Arbuthnot Latham, explains: *“More privately and family owned businesses are now exposed to inheritance tax than ever before, often without realising it. Allowances*

have stayed frozen as asset values have risen, reliefs have tightened and HMRC scrutiny has increased.

“We see the same issue recurring across the sector: successful companies built over decades, with little clarity over what would happen if the owner were no longer there. This is something we encounter regularly as commercial bankers specialising in the construction sector – and we can help you avoid it.”

What has changed – and why it affects business owners

For many years, business owners assumed that tax reliefs would protect most, if not all, of their estate. That assumption is now riskier. While the detail is complex, the direction of travel is clear: increasingly, a broader range of assets – from business interests to property portfolios and now pensions – can contribute to an IHT liability:

- Since April 2026, Business Relief – which can reduce the taxable value of qualifying trading businesses – has become more tightly applied, with up to £2.5 million per individual potentially eligible for 100% relief, and amounts above that typically receiving 50% relief, depending on structure and eligibility.
- At the same time, inheritance tax thresholds have remained frozen, meaning inflation and rising asset values quietly pull more estates into scope.
- And from April 2027, pensions are also set to form part of the taxable estate for IHT purposes.

In simple terms, more is exposed, and less may be protected than many business owners assume.

Why scaffolding and contracting owners are particularly exposed

Scaffolding business owners face a perfect storm of risk. First, much of the value is illiquid – contracts, plant, vehicles and goodwill cannot quickly be converted into cash without damaging the business. Second, wealth is often intertwined – personal guarantees, property held personally but used by the business, or profits reinvested rather than extracted.

Succession planning is frequently delayed because ‘the business comes first’. Owners intend to address it when things slow down – but growth, diversification or generational change only adds complexity.

Get up to speed in less than 30 minutes

Watch Arbuthnot Latham’s webinar on protecting your wealth, which summarises recent inheritance tax changes in a clear, straightforward way and illustrates, through three case studies, how early planning can reduce IHT exposure.



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO

The difference planning can make

Managed in good time, inheritance tax planning can materially change outcomes. Effective planning can:

- Reduce the overall inheritance tax liability
- Create clarity and certainty for families and successors
- Ensure wealth passes on your terms, not HMRC’s

This is not about avoidance. It is about structure, timing and control. Small decisions made years in advance often have outsized effects later on.

In the earlier example, modest changes – made while the owner was alive and trading – would have allowed funds to be earmarked and reliefs properly secured. The difference is preparation.

The role of a wealth planner

At Arbuthnot Latham, our wealth planners spend time to get to know you and your circumstances in order to minimise IHT on your business. Their role typically involves:

- Understanding personal, family and business goals
- Coordinating tax, investment and succession considerations
- Stress-testing scenarios such as illness, death, retirement or exit
- Building plans that evolve as rules and circumstances change

A more controlled outcome

Consider the stark contrast between these two scenarios. In one, families deal reactively with tax bills after a death, making forced decisions under pressure. In the other, wealth is transferred gradually and deliberately during life, with clarity over who benefits and when.

The latter does not just protect value – it protects relationships, businesses and legacies.

Ultimately, inheritance planning is about ensuring that more of what you have built stays within the family, rather than being lost through inaction.

Taking the next step

This starts with asking a few honest questions:

- Do I actually know what my estate looks like today?
- Do I know how much could go to inheritance tax?
- If something happened tomorrow, who would really benefit most – my family or HMRC?

For business owners, planning should be seen as part of responsible ownership, not a separate financial exercise. Just as health and safety, insurance and succession planning protect what you have built, so does understanding your inheritance tax exposure.

Start the conversation now

If this article has prompted you to reflect on your own position, you can bring clarity and identify practical next steps by having an initial discussion with Paul Reidy, Director of Construction Services at Arbuthnot Latham, on: 020 7012 2041 or PaulReidy@arbuthnot.co.uk

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NO SPACE? NO PROBLEM

In this feature, we look at three standout scaffolding projects delivering against the demands of dense urban environments. From a large-scale recladding scheme on a live city-centre building, to a heritage redevelopment on a busy riverside street, the transformation of a historic theatre within a landlocked urban footprint, and a busy hotel in the heart of a city, each project demonstrates how innovative design and meticulous planning can overcome restricted access, limited ground support and complex stakeholder requirements.



MALVERN SCAFFOLDING: SCALA THEATRE

Malvern Scaffolding provided a full scaffolding package, including a temporary roof covering and multi-elevation access, to support the renovation and transformation of the historic Scala Theatre in Worcester City Centre.

The Scala Theatre project presented a range of logistical and design challenges typical of city-centre projects: tight access, landlocked zones and adjacent structures including an adjacent higher building and a bustling pub courtyard.

A Duo-Pitch Roof Design used smaller bay dimensions to reduce overall height and eliminate the need for tie chords within the roof, simplifying construction and improving aesthetics. A key innovation was the use of anchored cantilevered beamed frames off the adjacent building to support the roof system. This eliminated the need for full-height support structures, saving approximately £100,000 in costs and significantly reducing material usage, labour and environmental impact. The frames were boarded to gain access to pull through the sheeting and always giving safe access. The final stage was to install gutters to the main roof and then weatherproof the working platform: this was achieved with ply boarding and a rubber self-adhesive

membrane.

Additional cantilevered structures were deployed to support up to five scaffold lifts and roof structures over adjacent buildings where ground support was not possible. As large sections of scaffold were totally reliant on the anchor ties working in shear loads, Malvern employed a comprehensive scheme of testing the ties using a bespoke shear testing rig.

The Curved façade strategy involved an adapted design with a small CI sheet roof to minimise ground-level footprint impact. Special features included: splayed scaffold with integrated protection fan; oversized rubbish chute with cantilevered boarding; 7m x 6m loading bay with 10kN/m² capacity; multi-lift Haki stair access; bridged 15m spine beams to support temporary roof section; bridged beams to maintain uninterrupted internal renovation works.

Using tube-lock scaffold (max 4m length) enhanced manual handling and eliminated the need for splicing. The Haki System & Haki-Tec Roof was chosen for lightweight strength, reduced material requirements, and faster assembly, while efficient logistics saw reduced material volumes and streamlined delivery scheduling, minimising site disruption and storage needs.



INNER CITY SCAFFOLDING: PARKSIDE COURT

Inner City Scaffolding was tasked with developing a complex and innovative solution to provide safe access for a monumental recladding project on a live building. This involved creating a large-scale, engineered HAKI System scaffolding for the main building, reaching up to a 40m roof level, and integrating steel shore and triple bank 1300mm HD Spine Beams.

Additionally, the initiative included a traditional tube, fitting, and beam approach for lower-level podium building upgrades, a comprehensive logistics package, and crucial safety features like lightning protection due to the building's topographical location.

Safety and compliance were top priorities. Inner City implemented the HAKI System scaffolding with an external HAKI access stair tower. This system allowed the site team to use the HAKI Advanced Guard Rail for collective fall protection, significantly reducing the time spent working at height. Where practical, beam work positioning was carefully coordinated to allow safe installation from existing roofs, protected with Temporary Edge Protection solutions as per NASC technical guidance TG1 Temporary Edge Protection. The package also included a goods hoist to assist with the recladding works and scaffolding.

This pre-planned approach minimised manual handling during the erection and dismantling process, especially given that no crane use was available for any part of the project. Due to the lack of foundation support from the building, Inner City devised a groundbreaking approach that involved transferring loads to minimal areas, including the building's steel frame. This required scaffolding service loads

to be transferred onto engineered scaffolding beam work arrangements, with spans between supports exceeding 25 metres. These were then attached to purpose-built steel shores linked to the building's core steel structure.

The project involved approximately 4,000m² of FR netted external facade scaffolding, requiring 600 individual support legs and 1,000 linear metres of HD Asterix Beams, X-Beams, and Ladder Beams.

Despite the project's complexity, it was delivered on time. The project required 160,000kg of materials to be delivered and erected on schedule. Targets were met with constant due diligence towards the residents, a functioning NHS centre and busy traffic routes on all elevations. The use of the HAKI system significantly reduced the need for timber scaffold boards, massively lowering the project's environmental footprint and minimising fire risk with non-flammable materials. The debris netting was compliant with TS62 testing and certification, ensuring full confidence that fire risks were adequately controlled. The set sizes and simple configuration of system scaffolding also reduced the need for power tools, providing further comfort and less disruption to the residents.

The project was executed with minimal disruption to the daily lives of the residents. Early concerns about the inclusion of monoflex sheeting were addressed by redesigning it with debris netting, allowing natural light into the building for the project's 18-month duration. There was also a strong emphasis on maintaining clear and uninterrupted access to the NHS centre. Beam work sections were specially designed and positioned to avoid impacting the centre. Logistical deliveries were stringently planned with the customer to avoid busy times and high footfall areas, with daily meetings held to plan the delivery and collection of materials.

GKR SCAFFOLDING: BRETTENHAM HOUSE

Occupying a prime location on the elbow of the River Thames, Brettenham House is a striking example of Art Deco architecture, built in the early 1930s. It was being converted into an iconic, sustainable, landmark office building. GKR Scaffolding provided a temporary access solution across the project, as well as providing environmental containment with a complex temporary roof structure.

The company had to overcome the challenges of working in an extremely densely occupied space on Savoy Street, always needing to maintain safe access and egress. There was extensive planning due to the volume of temporary works that were required on the project. When engaging at tender stage, GKR foresaw the risks that had to be taken into account with the design, such as the narrow logistical constraints of Savoy Street, loadings upon a heritage building and the management of pedestrian footfall in a densely populated area.

In addition, the GKR engineering and senior leadership team saw that there would be a number of considerations that had to be taken into account, such as the impact of the wind, as well as the methodology of the build, to work efficiently with the project programme. Early engagement was key as GKR partnered with McLaren Construction to overcome the inherent challenges of working on a large-scale project adjacent to the Strand.

For improved programme accuracy as well as making it easier to identify and discuss issues with its relevant stakeholders, GKR developed task video analysis mock-ups before construction to virtually deliver the product and present their vision, which required the contribution and extensive pre-planning from the whole leadership team.

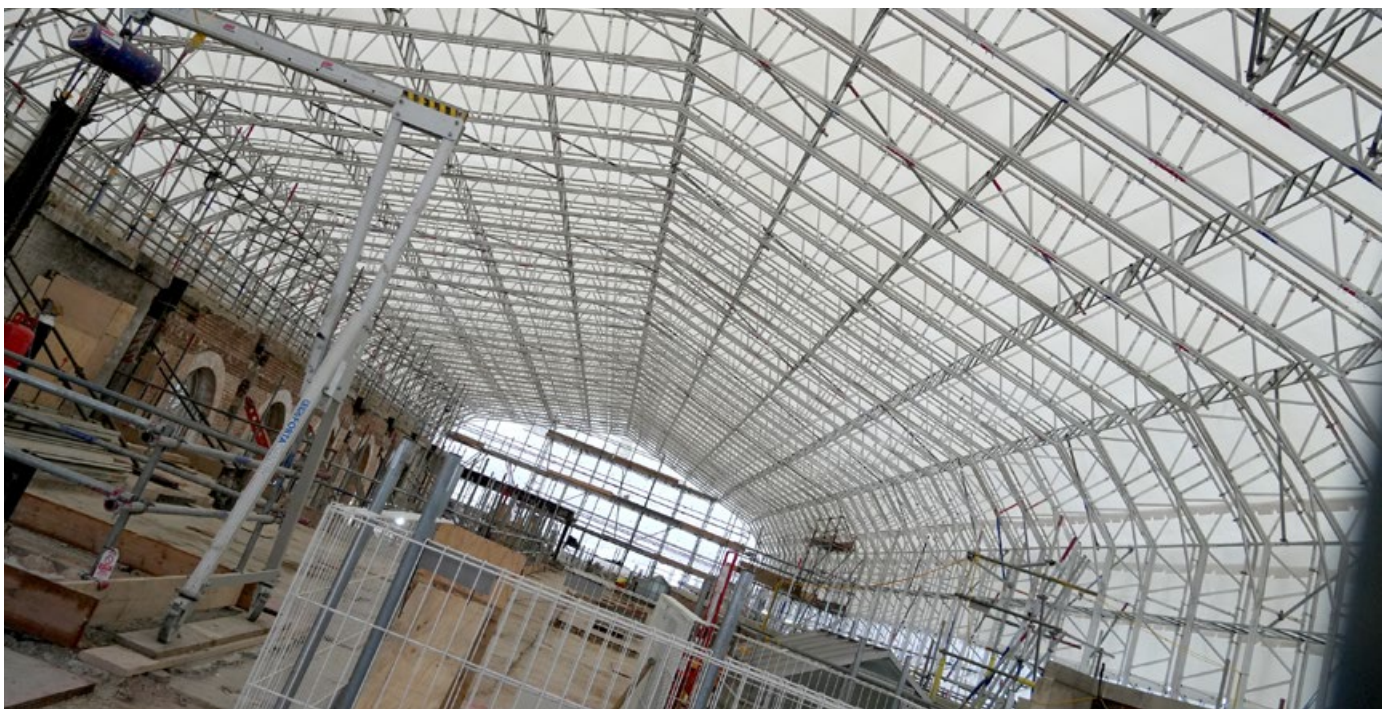
For a project of this scale an innovative approach was essential. A 100% tool tethering policy was implemented on the project, as well as material tethering when working



over Waterloo Bridge - including using the Elimin-8 tethered scaffold fitting. Eliminating the risk of falling materials from height not only ensured peace of mind for McLaren but also reduced the level of risk to the scaffolding operatives.

GKR's scope of works includes 8200m² of independent scaffold and 4.2km of platforming; 80m cantilevered 10kN gantry spanning Savoy Street to support hoist logistics and site access; two 2000kg cantilevered beam hoists and two cantilevered hoist base supports; and a 2200m² temporary roof, constructed entirely by hand, given limited space and mechanical constraints.

The project consisted of 11,520 operative hours to erect the complete structure, with no lost time injuries. GKR Scaffolding have also collaborated with McLaren in an occupational health drive by employing a hygienist to conduct noise surveys throughout the project with scaffolders being equipped with dosimeters. This has provided McLaren with a deep understanding of how to manage noise on site and where the exposure points are.





BRAND ACCESS SOLUTIONS: MOXY HOTEL

Brand Access Solutions delivered an intricate full-building scaffold and weatherproof temporary roof over the fully operational Moxy Hotel in Bristol city centre. Combining advanced system scaffolding, custom engineering, and meticulous planning, the company protected the busy hotel without restricting guest access or daily operations.

The client required complete scaffold encapsulation and a robust, watertight temporary roof to enable modernisation and upgrade works while the hotel remained open to the public. Key challenges included: timber structure needing bespoke tie details; complex roof geometry with multiple

levels and façade projections; high footfall city-centre location with unrestricted guest and public access.

The CUPLOK System Scaffold was installed in three split levels, with phased sequencing and watertight sheeting ensuring continuous weather protection and optimal working conditions. A modular large-span roof system with integrated drainage safeguarded works through all weather conditions, allowing year-round productivity. Robust public protection included clear fencing, safe routes and fan beams for dropped-object safety. Early morning deliveries minimised local traffic disruption, while exclusion zones and dedicated marshalling completely segregated the public from active scaffold works. A breathalyser clock-in system enforced a strict 0.00 alcohol tolerance for all operatives.



MORE THAN A TEST REPORT

Why choosing the right testing laboratory matters

Across the scaffolding sector, testing is often treated as the final step before certification. In reality, the quality of the testing process itself can directly influence product safety, approval timelines, and long-term market confidence.

As technical requirements continue to evolve and manufacturers increasingly target international markets, choosing the right testing partner is becoming one of the most important decisions in product development.

Confidence in a scaffolding system is built long before a project reaches site. It starts with engineering, continues through manufacturing, and is ultimately validated through testing. Yet one important reality is still often overlooked across the industry: not all testing laboratories deliver the same level of technical capability, engineering understanding, or real-world evaluation.

Two laboratories may appear similar on paper while producing very different levels of technical support and reliability in practice.

Infrastructure capability

One of the biggest differences is infrastructure capability. Some laboratories are limited to simplified or small-scale testing setups, while others are equipped to carry out full-scale structural evaluations under realistic loading conditions. In scaffolding, where systems are exposed to complex and variable site conditions, this distinction matters far more than many manufacturers initially realise.

BS EN 12811, the standard that underpins both TG20 and TG30, requires more than isolated component checks. It demands an understanding of how scaffolding systems behave as complete structures under load. Testing environments that cannot properly represent real-world conditions may still produce compliant-looking results on paper while failing to reflect actual on-site performance.

Engineering knowledge

Scaffolding systems are not simply a collection of independent components. Stability, connection behaviour, installation sequence and load distribution all interact together continuously. Laboratories with direct experience in the scaffolding sector are often better positioned to identify critical details before testing even begins, helping manufacturers avoid repeated test programmes, unexpected failures, and unnecessary delays.

International market access

Increasingly, manufacturers are also looking for testing partners that can support international certification pathways and help navigate different regulatory environments. A laboratory with experience across multiple standards and approval systems can often reduce duplication, improve efficiency and support faster market access.

This early-stage technical collaboration is becoming more valuable throughout the industry. Effective test planning, practical interpretation of standards and pre-assessment



support can significantly reduce certification risk while improving overall confidence in the final product.

Manufacturers entering new markets are also discovering that a test report alone is no longer enough. Clients, approval bodies and contractors increasingly want confidence that products have been evaluated under realistic conditions by laboratories with genuine sector expertise.

Laboratories responding to these changing expectations are investing more heavily in large-scale testing infrastructure, engineering-led evaluation, and internationally recognised accreditation.

A changing role

Ticemlabs is among the laboratories focusing on this approach, supporting scaffolding manufacturers through large-scale structural testing, engineering evaluation, and internationally recognised accredited testing services. With experience across standards including BS EN 12811 and EN 74, and holding IAS accreditation recognised under the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement, Ticemlabs works with manufacturers from the early evaluation stage through to formal testing and international certification.

As safety expectations continue to rise and compliance frameworks become more demanding, the role of testing laboratories is changing across the scaffolding industry. The most effective laboratories are no longer viewed simply as report-issuing service providers. They are technical partners contributing to safer, more reliable and more competitive scaffolding solutions.

In an industry where safety, reliability and reputation are closely connected, testing is no longer just about obtaining a certificate. It is about building confidence in a product before it ever reaches site.

Find out more at: www.ticem-labs.com

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WEX IN ACTION: LEE MARLEY GROUP SETS THE PACE

The Lee Marley Group has demonstrated what meaningful engagement with the NASC Work Experience Pledge (WEX Pledge) looks like in practice. By getting involved with the initiative, the company has brought new skills to the industry, new employees to the company and new hope to young people.

The NASC Work Experience Pledge is an industry initiative in partnership with the UK's Department for Work and Pensions. The primary goal is to create 5,000 meaningful work experience opportunities across the scaffolding and access sector by the end of 2026. It is designed to help tackle the construction industry's ongoing skills shortage, change perceptions of the trade, and inspire the next generation of talent.

Scaffolding Insider spoke to Sara Calvo, Scaffold Training Manager, Lee Marley Group, to find out how the company went about enacting their Pledge.

Scaffolding Insider: Why did you decide to become involved in the WEX Pledge?

Sara Calvo: Our involvement followed a conversation with Rebekah [NASC's Careers Executive] about supporting work experience opportunities. Rather than offering a traditional placement alone, we recognised the potential of the WEX Pledge as a recruitment pathway. This enabled us to create an insight day with genuine employment outcomes, providing participants not only with exposure to the industry but also with a clear route into work.

S.I. How did you choose who to reach out to?

S.C. We focused on Tower Hamlets, where we had immediate vacancies available. Working closely with our established networks, including the Department for Work and Pensions, local authority employment brokerage service, WorkPath, and targeted advertising through our own channels, we promoted the opportunity specifically within the local community.

S.I. How did you reach out to them?

S.C. Interested applicants were invited to a screening morning at the local Jobcentre Plus. A panel-style meeting allowed us to engage directly with candidates, assess suitability and invite promising individuals to the next stage.

S.I. What insight did you provide them?

S.C. The insight day gave candidates a realistic and engaging introduction to both Lee Marley Group and the scaffolding industry. Participants were introduced to what a two-year apprenticeship journey would involve, the training



and support available through the Lee Marley Scaffolding Division, and the long-term career opportunities within the trade. We showcased a number of live and completed projects, while discussing the personal qualities, work ethic and commitment required to succeed in scaffolding.

S.I. I believe you did a guided site tour?

S.C. The guided tour was a key element of the experience. It was at our live site in Tower Hamlets, Leven Road, in partnership with Taylor Wimpey. Participants travelled by hoist to the seventh floor, providing a unique perspective of the development and the scale of work involved. Our Contracts Manager offered practical insight into the realities of the role, including the weights involved when handling scaffold tubes and fittings, helping candidates understand the physical demands and responsibilities associated with the profession. This experience generated genuine excitement and curiosity, while also giving a clear and honest picture of the working environment.

S.I. What was the visitors' response?

S.C. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants were surprised by the weight of even a short scaffold tube and gained a new appreciation for the physicality of the trade. The journey to the seventh floor in the hoist certainly created a memorable moment, with plenty of excitement and enthusiasm. Above all, candidates were impressed by the scale of the project, the professionalism of the team and the opportunities available within the industry.

S.I. I believe you ended up offering some candidates work?

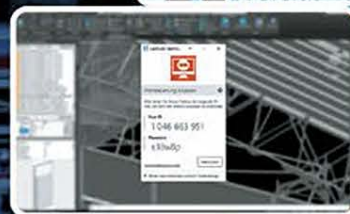
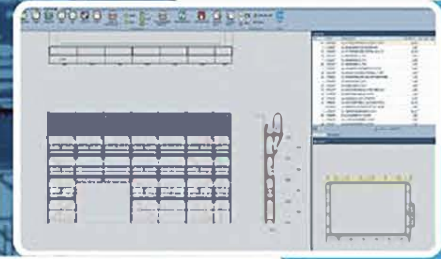
S.C. The enthusiasm shown by candidates made the selection process particularly challenging. Many had previous construction experience and demonstrated strong motivation. We looked beyond experience alone, paying close attention to attitude, punctuality and engagement at the event. Candidates arrived prepared, asked questions and demonstrated the professionalism and willingness to learn. As a result, two individuals were offered labouring positions with immediate start dates, while a further two were shortlisted for apprenticeship opportunities.

S.I. What are your overall reflections?

S.C. The experience reinforced the value of creating direct, meaningful routes into employment. The industry can build on this approach by strengthening partnerships between employers, training providers and local employment services to create more accessible pathways into skilled trades. The success of the initiative has been extremely encouraging, and we are already looking forward to delivering it again.

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