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Scaffolding Insider

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NOVEMBER 2023

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From the Editor

Hello and a very warm welcome to the first edition of Scaffolding Insider.

I realise I will be a new name to you, so a brief introduction: I am a writer, editor and journalist of over 25 years' experience and have produced magazines in a number of related sectors, including plumbing & heating and the hire industry. I will be working very closely with the NASC team to deliver Scaffolding Insider to you.

This new magazine will be published electronically ten times a year and will be distributed to NASC members and non-members, contracting businesses and the whole supply chain. It will also be delivered to influencers in the industry and in government.

Of course there are already some excellent magazines and websites out there but we want to make Scaffolding Insider a valuable addition to what's on offer and a key benefit of your NASC membership.

Every issue I will bring you a unique combination of industry news and views (from both the scaffolding industry and wider economy) and NASC news and comment. NASC has been setting and driving forward standards in the industry for many years and is fortunate enough to have some of the sector's foremost experts in its team, so I will take advantage of having this expertise on hand to ensure you get the most knowledgeable and useful information possible.

While I will liaise with my NASC colleagues as we choose what stories to cover in the magazine, I would also love to hear from you. I want to tackle the issues that are important to you – so please do email in if you have any ideas: editor@nasc.org.uk

In this, our first issue, we bring you plenty of news from the industry and NASC and we also look at two issues that affect pretty much everyone in the sector: skills shortages and mental health. NASC is taking steps towards helping the industry address the skills shortage – read more about that on pages 13-14; meanwhile, no company should be ignoring their employees' mental health. As you will read on pages 8-10, this is irresponsible on both a human and a commercial level: this is not an issue that is going away.

Finally, there will be advertising space available to buy in our second edition, which will come out in January: please email us as soon as you can if you are interested in buying space so you can advertise to our broad readership, full of decision-makers.



I hope you enjoy the magazine.

Nick Campion
Editor

CONTENTS

From the Editor	3
Industry News	4
NASC Awards	7
Feature: Mental Health	8
NASC Guidance	11
NASC Membership Audit	12
Feature: Skills Shortage	13

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Commission calls for infrastructure rethink

The head of the National Infrastructure Commission, Sir John Armitt, has called for a Government reset on decision-making if the country is to deliver vital energy, transport and other key networks over the next 30 years.

In the Commission's new report, Sir John said that the time had come to make good decisions at pace and end a stop/start approach to infrastructure planning, as well as delivering policy stability and pro-investment regulation to salvage infrastructure delivery.

The report says the government must set out a clear plan and stick to it to create certainty for private sector investors and build up effective supply chains. It also wants to see pro-investment regulation, as well as a speeding up of the planning system for major projects, particularly energy transmission schemes.

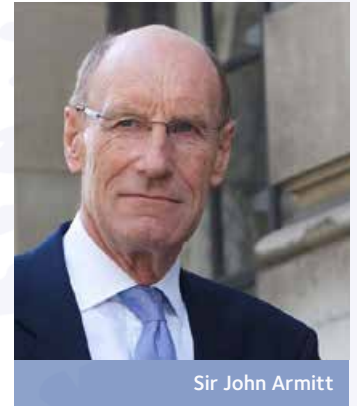
Sir John said the report was probably the "most comprehensive assessment yet of the infrastructure costs associated with supporting regional growth and reaching net zero". He added: *We stand at a pivotal moment in time, with the opportunity to make a major difference to this country's future. But we need to get on with it.*

"People often talk about infrastructure as the backbone of our economy: what our infrastructure needs now is the collective mettle to turn commitments into action that will reap rewards for decades to come."

Main recommendations

The report's main recommendations are:

- Backing electrification as the only viable option for decarbonising buildings at scale
- Government fully subsidises the costs of installing heat pumps for one third of households – based on income – and offers £7,000 support to all others
- Creating a new strategic energy reserve to boost Great Britain's economic security
- Major public transport upgrades in England's most congested cities to unlock economic growth, and an urgent and comprehensive review of rail priorities for the North and the Midlands following government's recent decision on HS2
- Better maintenance of existing roads and targeted enhancements on the national road network
- Building additional water supply infrastructure and reducing leakage, move to compulsory water metering
- Urgently implementing reforms to meet a 65% recycling target by 2035, and phasing out energy from waste plants without carbon capture facilities.



Sir John Armitt

New helpline reveals mental health worries

A newly established mental health helpline for UK construction workers has revealed that a third of texts are from individuals contemplating suicide. The Big Brew's helpline, backed by charity Band of Builders, was launched a year ago to help address the well-recognised mental health crisis in the construction sector.

The helpline is part of the Big Brew campaign, which is designed to prompt discussions around mental health within the construction industry and provide a platform for workers to voice their anxieties and fears.

The helpline has revealed that as well as texts concerning suicide, it also has received many relating to depression (16.2%), stress and anxiety (15.4%), relationship issues (14.2%), and isolation (14%). 44.2% of those reaching out do it during working hours, with Fridays marking the weekly peak, while 80.6% of total helpline usage occurs within the working week.

Band of Builders launched the inaugural Big Brew event in October 2021 and the campaign to raise awareness and fundraising has quickly gathered pace.



Inflation stabilises

Materials price inflation has stabilised across the industry, according to the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) product availability group. In its latest statement, the body said that most material availability has now returned to pre-Covid levels, with only semi-conductors causing concern during September. However, it did add that smaller firms especially should still expect to feel the squeeze for some time.

The price of timber and some plastic and energy-intensive products is now falling thanks to a stagnation of demand, which is due particularly to the ongoing decline in housebuilding activity over the last six months. Poor weather and strikes also contributed to a slowdown in activity over the summer.

Construction output falls again

Construction output fell 0.5% in volume terms in August in a second consecutive monthly fall. With the wider UK economy bumping along at 0.2% growth, construction has now become a drag on growth rather than a driver. The decrease in monthly output came from a decrease in new work (1.5% fall), partially offset by an increase in repair and maintenance (1.0% up).

At the sector level, five out of the nine sectors saw a fall in August 2023, with the main work sectors under pressure being private commercial, private new housing, and infrastructure which decreased 4.1%, 1.4% and 0.9%, respectively.

Construction workers vote to strike

Thousands of construction workers employed at energy sites across the United Kingdom have voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. The industrial action could involve up to 3,000 workers at various energy facilities, including oil refineries and nuclear power stations; it results from a pay dispute that has been escalating in recent months.

The construction workers in question fall under the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI), which governs their terms and conditions of employment. The catalyst for the strike is the rejection of a pay deal proposed by employers, offering an 8.5 per cent increase for 2024 and a 3.5 per cent raise for 2025. Workers argue that these proposed increases need to adequately address their financial concerns, particularly in light of the rising cost of living.

Charlotte Brumpton-Childs, the GMB union's National Officer, said, "Our members' pay has fallen over 20 per cent behind inflation. The employers have forced our members into a position where they are taking part in industrial action ballots of this scale for the first time in their careers. The message from the workforce is loud and clear: value their work."

The strike could have significant implications for the UK's energy sector, potentially causing disruption in the construction and maintenance of crucial energy infrastructure. The unions are calling on employers to return to the negotiating table to seek a resolution that better meets the needs and expectations of the workers.

Industry reacts to scrapping of HS2

After Prime Minister Rishi Sunak confirmed the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2, the construction industry has reacted with disappointment to the announcement.

Eddie Tuttle, Director of Policy, External Affairs and Research at the CIOB, said: "Long-term infrastructure projects, like HS2, employ large numbers of skilled workers and apprentices and go some way to securing a pipeline of consistent work for the construction sector.

"It is well recognised that the built environment industry works best when it has certainty in policy making and investment, so we hope the HS2 funding is reinvested into similar projects which will support the upskilling of the construction workforce, particularly in the north of England, where such investment is so vital for the levelling up agenda.

"In a time of economic uncertainty, where we are witnessing supply-chain collapse, it is now more necessary than ever for government to commit to public sector projects that benefit not only the local workforce and their communities but also the wider economy.

"It's therefore important government moves quickly to provide more detail on the plans it now has to improve the transport infrastructure in the north and communicates with the

construction sector which will be responsible for delivering them."

Paul Hamer, Chief Executive at Sir Robert McAlpine, added: "If we hope to build affordable infrastructure that offers value to the UK and stimulates economic and social growth, we need to take a longer-term view on infrastructure investment. With HS2 prized as the UK's flagship levelling-up project, it's disappointing that the economic and political climate has deterred this ambitious project to improve and rebalance the overall economic health of the country from inception to completion.

"Infrastructure is one of the key pillars of economic longevity and improvement. Whilst it is promising for industry and the country to see the alternative infrastructure investments proposed, proposals must now be accompanied by robust delivery plans to ensure intentions are viable and we are still building towards a better future, rather than taking a step back."

Stu McNroy, Chief Executive of the Construction Plant-hire Association, commented: "The news that the Manchester leg of



HS2 is to be cancelled is extremely disappointing and a significant blow to the UK construction sector. This decision shall undoubtedly further undermine confidence and impact future investment at a time when the economy remains fragile.

"Whilst in no way likely to offset the negative effect of cancelling the Manchester leg of HS2, it is imperative that Mr Sunak's commitment to completing the HS2 line to Euston, and diverting Manchester leg funding to a plethora of other projects aimed at boosting transport infrastructure in the north, are actioned without delay.

"Failure to follow through with current infrastructure plans has already damaged confidence in UK construction and impacted on the UK as a destination for international investment. We can ill-afford the government to repeat this failure again."

CISRS' new Labourer's card proposal

The Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme (CISRS) has proposed a change that would mean that all new entrants into the scaffolding sector would be initially issued with a Labourer's card once they complete the COTS course.

This proposed shift is a marked change from the current procedure, which allows a delegate to apply for either a Labourer or their first Trainee card.

The issue with applying for the Trainee card immediately means that the clock is already ticking on the first 18-month card validity period. If new entrants do not get the relevant industry experience in this time, their card could expire without them having started their formal training. At this stage they would need to complete the Part 1 to obtain their second Trainee card; however, all other relevant training and assessment (Part 2, VQ2, Skills test) would then need to be completed within that second 18-month period.

The proposed new route would have all new entrants receiving a CISRS Labourer card on completion of COTS. The first 18-month Trainee card would then be applied for by the training centre on completion of Part 1.

Dave Mosley, CISRS Managing Director, said, "By making this change, it will ensure that all operatives holding a trainee card, having already completed their Part 1, will have received industry-recognised training, in basing out, erecting and dismantling a range of scaffolds, towers, birdcages, independents etc plus other relevant industry guidance such as SG4, TG20, RAMS, before carrying out these jobs on site.

"We will review Part 1 content to ensure it remains relevant and achievable for delegates who may now attend courses having had less time 'on the spanners'."

CISRS is also proposing to change the time requirement between obtaining the first Labourer card and attending a Part 1 course from six to three months, allowing those with some industry experience but no formal training to attend the Part 1 and obtain their first Trainee card sooner.

The adjustments aim to streamline the entry process and ensure that trainees have a clear, structured path to progress in their careers.

If you would like to give your view to CISRS about the proposed changes, email enquiries@cisrs.org.uk



KPMG's record Carillion fine

KPMG has been handed a record fine for serious failings in its auditing of Carillion. The UK accounting watchdog imposed a £30m penalty, which was reduced by 30% to around £21m after co-operation and admissions were taken into account.

Elizabeth Barrett, Executive Counsel of the Financial Reporting Council said: "The number, range, and seriousness of the deficiencies in the audits of Carillion during the period leading up to its failure was exceptional and undermined the credibility and the public trust in audit.

"Many of the breaches involve failing to adhere to the most basic and fundamental audit concepts such as to act with professional scepticism and to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. The breaches in relation to the 2016 audit even include failing to ensure that the audit process itself was properly managed and that the audit file was a reliable record. These requirements lie at the heart of proper auditing."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belgravia take charge of Preston sites

Belgravia is now in charge of the 469-apartment Stoneygate Central Scheme and the 21-storey Lofthaus project in Preston. The two schemes have a combined development value of £165m and Belgravia has appointed its in-house team at UKIG Developments to act as construction manager on both projects. Belgravia and UKIG are now looking to assemble a team of package contractors to get work started early next year.

50 up for CUPLOK

Fifty years ago, the first patent for CUPLOK was filed in the Netherlands. The fully galvanised, multi-purpose steel system scaffold is used for general access, shoring and supporting vertical loads. CUPLOK is widely used across various commercial, infrastructure and industrial projects.



Rose wins MRI

Rose System Scaffolding has secured a prestigious new contract to support the construction of Manchester Royal Infirmary's new A&E Emergency Department. Set to be carried out in two phases, the expansion project boasts a series of enhancements, most notably six state-of-the-art operating theatres. Additionally, the Emergency Department will witness substantial expansion and upgrades.



Doors open in March '24

The Open Doors experience, which takes visitors behind the scenes to showcase the fantastic range of careers available in construction, will return in March 2024. The construction sites participating will range from houses to skyscrapers, and visitor opportunities will also include a wide range of virtual and online events, whilst manufacturing and training facilities will open their doors to demonstrate the off-site roles across the sector.

Vistry requests 10% pay cut

It has been reported that Vistry has written to subcontractors asking them to take a 10% pay cut on existing contracts. The company announced a switch in its business model last month to become a partnerships-only housing business. Chief Executive Greg Fitzgerald pledged to return £1bn to shareholders over three years as assets are released from the traditional house building division.

Job cuts at Sir Robert McAlpine

Sir Robert McAlpine is set to launch a second wave of job cuts, just five months after 40 layoffs. The contractor is believed to be planning to announce a fresh round of staff consultations for up to 190 redundancies. This has not yet been confirmed by the company.

The Awards countdown is on...

The shortlists have been announced, the dinner suits have been cleaned, the tables have been booked. On 17 November, the winners of the most prestigious awards for the scaffolding industry will be announced.

The famous NASC Ball and Awards 2023 has been sold out for some time and this year are being held at the Park Plaza, Westminster Bridge, with a theme of the glamorous roaring '20s. The Awards, which welcome over 800 guests, will celebrate and champion people and projects from across the sector and across the nation. Below are the shortlisted entries and we'll bring you all the news from the big night in the next issue of Scaffolding Insider.



SCAFFOLDING ANCILLARY SERVICE OF THE YEAR AWARD

SPONSERED BY



Fulcrum Scaffold Safety

iPhorms

Smart Scaffolder (CADS)

StrikeSoft

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR AWARD

SPONSERED BY



Cameron Rowswell – GKR Scaffolding

Darrin Pryde – Lyndon SGB

Jack Kirkcaldy – iScaff Access Solutions

Mark Mileson – Lyndon SGB

HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD

SPONSERED BY



Laura Hardie – Bilfinger UK

Malachi Beasley – LTC Specialist Scaffolding

Peter Humenny – GKR Scaffolding

Queen's Tower Delivery Team – JDC Scaffolding

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

SPONSERED BY



Benchmark App – Benchmark Scaffolding

Ideal Cantilever – Ideal Scaffolding (Southern)

Liftbot – Kewazo

ScaffFloat – Towfloatwork

NASC PRESIDENT'S AWARD

SPONSERED BY



Adrian Rooney – Midland Scaffolding Services

Kellyanne Conway – JR Scaffold Services

Luke Caldicott – Lyndon SGB

Phil Wise – GKR Scaffolding

SCAFFOLD DESIGN OF THE YEAR

SPONSERED BY



Agile Design Consultancy – Wakehurst Place, London

Enigma Industrial Services – Taf Fechan Viaduct, Merthyr Tydfil

Rise Scaffold Services – Kings Chapel Cambridge

Tubular Techniques – HS2 Ruislip Sustainable Placements

PROJECT OF THE YEAR (SMALL)

SPONSERED BY



CWR Scaffolds – Bradford Live!

Narford Scaffolding – Elizabeth Fry Wing, HMP Norwich

Rise Scaffold Services – Kings Chapel Cambridge

Shield Services Group – The Crescent Centre, Bristol

PROJECT OF THE YEAR (MEDIUM)

SPONSERED BY



Bryson Scaffolding – Melksham House, Wiltshire

Connect Scaffolding – Pierhead Lock, London

D+R Group – Wakehurst Place, Haywards Heath

JDC Scaffolding – The Queens Tower Imperial College, London

PROJECT OF THE YEAR (LARGE)

SPONSERED BY



Altrad Services (UK) – Polar Crane Construction Enclosure, Hinkley

Bilfinger UK – T333 Sphere Inspection, Grangemouth

GKR Scaffolding – Portland House, London

Lyndon SGB – Manchester Town Hall



Mental health: TIME TO TAKE ACTION

Scaffolding companies must face the crisis in the workforce

“We’re a small company – just eight of us – and we knew the lad had had issues in the past but when he started to miss days regularly, I started to try and find out what was going on. But then, one day he just took his own life.”

So says Alan Harris, owner of Pro-Fix Access, a company which, in June this year, had to face up to the worst of all possible news when it comes to an employee. This is the reality behind the figures that show construction as a hotspot for poor mental health – and this is why it should not be ignored by anyone.

In the UK, 115 people die by suicide each week, with 75% of those deaths being male. Males aged 45–49 have the highest suicide rate. Workers in construction are at some of the highest risk of suicide in the country, with rates in the industry over three times higher than the national average. In 2021, 507 construction workers died by suicide; and the suicide rate among construction workers has increased for a fifth year in a row. In 2020, a CIOB report found that 97% of construction workers had felt stressed, 87% had experienced anxiety and 70% had experienced depression over the past year.



Alan Harris

“Suicide prevention should be an integral part of a positive and proactive approach to mental health at work.”

Counting the cost

The estimated cost of a suicide is around £1.7 million and this includes the time lost from work and lost production. It is not hard to imagine how a suicide would turn a workforce upside down. The organisation Business in the Community has produced an excellent toolkit for organisations dealing with such a situation. It says: *“Death by suicide can have a profound effect on a business and its employees. Organisations need to be able to respond by providing support to their employees to help them come to terms with their loss while ensuring that the impact on your organisation and its day-to-day activities is contained.”*

“Suicide prevention should be an integral part of a positive and proactive approach to mental health at work. But no mental health policy can ever eliminate the risk of suicide. In the event of a death by suicide, an appropriate response helps employees to come to terms with the loss of a colleague and friend while making it possible for an organisation to learn from one of the most difficult employee situations it will face.”

“A compassionate and supportive approach is responsible business practice and demonstrates that the organisation values its employees, helps build commitment, and shares lessons that will reduce the risk of a further suicide. An organisation’s senior leadership plays a critical role in setting the tone for how the rest of the workplace will respond to a suicide.”

Alan Harris comments: *“We’re a small team where everyone comes to the yard every morning and is sent out from there, so of course it had an effect on everyone, especially the employee’s cousin who also works with us. Being the*



“ Being a mental health first-aider doesn’t make you a professional of course but it does help you listen, look out for signs, and signpost for further help. ”

employer – not to mention the Chair of the NASC Health & Safety Committee – I was very conscious of doing the right things by all our other personnel. I told them all that we’d support them in any way they needed, including counselling – but it’s the age-old thing with scaffolders – they don’t want to talk, they just want to walk it off. Anything we can do as an industry to change this is so important.”

People find their own ways to deal with grief, of course, and Alan’s team is no exception. The business closed for the day so all employees could attend the funeral, and their former colleague is not forgotten – and is often remembered in conversation on those Friday evenings in the pub after a good week at work

However, there is clearly still a problem in the industry that means workers are not able to be open about their mental health. One person making a difference is James Dick, Senior HSE Advisor at KAEFER UK & Ireland. He explains: *“In 2013, I was going to take my life and had it all planned out. I felt hopeless and helpless and felt I had no-one to talk to. Fortunately, one day I confided in a friend, who persuaded me to go to the GP – a combination of this and having a nine-year-old daughter stopped me from putting my plans into action.*

“When I joined KAEFER, I felt that Health & Safety focused very much on the physical side of things and that the mental health support for our 3,000-3,500 employees was inadequate. Fortunately, the business identified the need to improve its mental health strategy in October 2021 and I was identified as the person to lead the project. There was a strong commitment to support Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training and now 140 people in the company have taken the course. Being a mental health first-aider doesn’t make you a professional of course but it does help you listen, look out for signs, and signpost for further help. I’m also pleased to say that since sharing my own story, many others have come forward with their own stories, which is a great step in the right direction.

“KAEFER really supports its MHFA team: we have regular meetings and often have the Leadership involved. These meetings allow us to learn from each other and also support each other in what can be a challenging role. People are encouraged to ask for help or take breaks as needed. This culture change, with support at the top of the company, is what’s needed to really make a change. It helps, I think, that our CEO was a scaffolder back in the day, so knows exactly what’s it’s like on the ground.”



James Dick

Culture change

Ian Hines is a psychotherapist and former scaffolder who strongly believes that company culture has to change. *“I’ve seen men cut casts off their arms so they can keep working – if that doesn’t tell a story, I don’t know what does. I lost someone very close to me and went back to work the same day and didn’t deal with my grief until years – and a heroin addiction – later.”*

It is this very male culture of not dealing with their emotions combined with the corporate culture of concentrating only on the bottom line that has become so toxic. While contractors might ask for evidence of scaffolding companies focusing on mental health, it’s often only skin deep, says Ian. He does recognise that it’s not easy for employers either though: *“I do recognise that employers have a difficult task. Everyone is competing hard for work and working to incredibly tight margins. But by not making allowances for mental health, employers are only storing up problems for the future. It might be better financially in the short term for workers to keep turning up even when they’re not well but down the line this could translate into much more expensive accidents, absence, productivity loss and recruitment costs.”*

“Some companies are fantastic of course but for many, the guys on the ground don’t feel valued and they feel expendable. We must make space in budgets for people to be supported: an investment in a bit of time off or maybe some counselling will pay dividends. People must be able to speak about how they’re feeling without the fear of losing their job.”

Ian’s company, Training in Mind, seeks to address mental health in the scaffolding sector and NASC members can use the NASC training fund to access Ian’s training. Ian also has high praise for the Lighthouse Club for its important hands-on work in the construction industry on mental health. He adds, *“It’s brilliant that NASC is funding so much MHFA training and I hope this only grows.”*

Stress and relationships

To flourish at work, we must, among other things, learn to navigate a complex and multi-layered system of relationships. Too often, people who experience stress at work are seen as weak, having some character flaw or lacking backbone. This is dangerous – it promotes a culture of shame that gets in the way of people asking for help or taking time off to get better. ‘Presenteeism’ has become the new normal.

Stress is not always obvious but does often show itself in physical symptoms: sleep problems, not eating properly, headaches, migraines, neck and back pain, tiredness. You don’t need this magazine article to tell you that scaffolding can be hard work but it’s not just that which can cause stress; there are several reasons why construction has a poor record on mental health, with factors including: working away from home; heavy workloads; long working hours; poor/rushed meals, poor hygiene facilities, all weathers, late payments and job insecurity. Poor management practices and a lack of understanding can add to the problem, too.

Even those employers trying to do the right thing can still fall into the trap of making mental health entirely the employee’s responsibility. Companies may on one hand promote mental health awareness but, on the other hand, are blind to the circumstances that negatively affect their employees. Instead they assume stress is inevitable and ignore the underlying structural causes.

Employers must create relationships with the workforce that break this barrier down. They must use the power of empathy to show employees that they are understood and not alone. The industry will not change unless employers, leaders and managers change their outlook and their expectations, and develop open and healthy workplace environments in which their workforce can thrive, improving productivity and reducing presenteeism. Deloitte UK reports that on average, businesses achieve a £5 return for every £1 spent on wellbeing support, so it makes commercial sense too. It’s time to change.

Work-related stress

*There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

For example, workers may say that they:

- ◉ are not able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- ◉ are unable to control the way they do their work
- ◉ don’t receive enough information and support
- ◉ are having trouble with relationships at work, or are being bullied
- ◉ don’t fully understand their role and responsibilities
- ◉ are not engaged when a business is undergoing change

Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age or disability may all affect whether a worker can cope.

By talking to your workers and understanding how to identify the signs of stress, you can prevent and reduce stress in your workplace.

*from ‘HSE: Work-related stress and how to manage it’



Ian Hines

Mental Health Webinar 22 November 2023

You can sign up by using the QR code below



NEW GUIDANCE FROM NASC

One of NASC's most important roles is to set the standards and guidance for the scaffolding and access industry. The guidance the organisation issues is rigorously researched and developed so NASC members and non-members alike can be confident that it is the definitive guidance that they should follow.

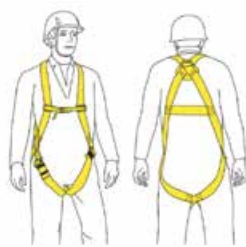
NASC has several items of guidance approaching publication, as detailed below.

SG16:23 Management of fall protection equipment

The aim of the SG16 guidance document, which has had a comprehensive review, is to provide employers with sufficient information to enable them to establish a successful management system regarding the supply, safe storage, and inspection of fall protection equipment.

NASC strongly recommends that safety harnesses are issued to all scaffolders, worn at all times when working at height, and are used in accordance with NASC's guidance document SG4 Preventing Falls in Scaffolding Operations. It is therefore important that employers implement a successful management system regarding the provision, storage and inspection of fall protection equipment.

This guidance covers areas such as: the Work at Height regulations; risk assessment; training; inspection; defects; maintenance; and specialist equipment. It is due to be released in approximately six weeks.



SG38:23 Guidance on mental health wellbeing

NASC has developed SG38 to help companies understand the mental health issues that we face in our industry. The guidance will help companies raise awareness among employees and help break down the stigma associated with mental ill health.

The construction industry lifestyle is undoubtedly both challenging and stressful. Long and demanding working hours, working away from home, on site for weeks at a time and uncertainty around the industry and the economy. These are just some of the factors contributing to poor mental health – plus whatever employees are dealing with in their lives outside of work.

In a workforce that is predominantly male, specific risks associated with male mental health also need to be considered. The tough guy image widespread in the construction industry is very unhelpful. Asking for help and opening up about emotions are just not things that come naturally to many of those working in the industry. The combination of these factors results in many suffering in silence.



This guidance covers areas such as: what to look out for; work-related stress; positive steps to support employees; suicide risks, myths and prevention. It is due to be released in approximately six weeks.

SG4:22 Prevention of falls in scaffolding operations

SG4:22 is a core NASC safety guidance document that provides industry best practice for fall prevention when erecting tube & fitting and now also includes system scaffolding. It will be re-issued in the next six weeks with an HSE foreword.

This invaluable document comprises 60 pages of detailed scaffolding sector analysis and safety guidance, with case studies to help bring the theory to life. Since the introduction of the guidance, it has become a must-have document for any company wanting to make the industry a safer place.



SG6 Manual handling in the scaffolding industry video

Some things are better explained visually – and manual handling guidance is one of them. That's why NASC has commissioned a video animation on manual handling best practice. The animated video, which will be available later this year, will focus on the required learning to keep employees safe from manual handling injuries.



NASC OFFERS NEW MEMBERS A HELPING HAND

NASC understands that applying for membership can be a lengthy and challenging process, especially for smaller or newer businesses. Yet the rigorous high standards of NASC membership are absolutely critical and must not be compromised. Its solution to this challenge is the introduction of Compliance Officers who can assist applicants with their membership applications and renewals.

These independent Officers can discuss all areas of members' and prospective members' businesses, from the administration side of things to the yard and on site. They can provide advice, support and feedback on how to improve their operations and meet the requirements for membership.

NASC's new application process will allow prospective members who meet the standards of membership to join within four weeks, where previously the process could take between four and 12 weeks to complete.

Clive Dickin, CEO of NASC, commented: *"Our high quality standards for members are critical for assuring clients and contractors who specify scaffolders that NASC members are the very best, and they are selecting partners whose standards of work, safety, compliance and efficiency are second-to-none. However, these standards can be seen from the outside as a barrier to entry because it used to take months and months to get through the membership application process and demonstrate sufficient quality."*

"The introduction of Compliance Officers means that those standards can – and must – still be met but the process will be a great deal quicker and smoother. Their hands-on assistance before and during the audit will help members and prospects to address any issues they may have, using the auditor's expertise and guidance."



The audit process is one of the reasons why many contractor clients of all sizes and sectors specify NASC-only or NASC-equivalent for their scaffolding requirements.

By joining NASC, companies benefit from:

- One to one expert NASC audit mentoring
- Access to over 135 industry guides on scaffolding and access standards
- Access to preferential rates on training courses
- Exclusive discounts on products and services from affiliated suppliers
- Access to business and training grants exclusive to members
- Access to legal counsel from industry specialists
- Access to representation on national committees and forums

In addition to improvements in the process outlined above, NASC has made a commitment to digitise its membership applications in 2024. These improvements will allow publicly-held information that supports the quality of a scaffolding contracting business to be used, helping new applicants and current members reduce the burden of paperwork, but maintaining the standards expected from all contracting members and their clients.

Clive Dickin added: *"There is no equivalent to NASC audited membership in the scaffolding and access industry: all NASC contracting members must meet these standards, making NASC the only true complete standard for clients of access and scaffolding looking for independently-audited, high-quality contracting businesses."*

NASC Membership Manager, Jamie McGuire, led on the development of the new process and added: *"Establishing our new Compliance Officers, with their new assistive approach to applicants, focusing on delivering a new member within weeks will help ensure the prospective member is recognised for its quality in a highly efficient manner."*

"NASC's Membership and Compliance committee is committed to systems improvements. Next, we are looking forward to reviewing the Membership Charter, ensuring the standards defined lead to high quality scaffolding and access solutions for clients, reducing risk and waste."

NASC welcomes all contracting scaffolding and access businesses that meet the recognised standards and would be pleased to hear from businesses that are interested in applying for membership. Call **020 7822 7400** or email enquiries@nasc.org.uk for more information.

SHORT CHANGE

The scaffolding sector, just like the construction industry as a whole, is woefully short of workers. Brexit and Covid have both played their part, with more than a third of the broader sector's workforce lost since 2017. While the Government has now placed a number of occupations on its list of jobs where immigration rules are relaxed, scaffolding is not one of them, and NASC has calculated that there are now around 2,300 vacancies in scaffolding being advertised each week.

Brexit and Covid are only part of the story. Clive Dickin, CEO of NASC, explains: *"The shortage of both experienced workers and trainees in the scaffolding sector has been building for some time and is a result of a wide range of issues. It is a rapidly ageing sector too, so even greater problems lie ahead if we don't act."*

"Part of the challenge is that scaffolding is not widely understood and sometimes has an image problem. NASC is determined to address this and to help people understand what a brilliant, rewarding career it can be. While every job has its downsides, I believe scaffolding has enormous upsides too: it is fascinating, technically-demanding work, there are committed and caring companies out there, people are working on truly transformational projects and they are earning a very good living. We have to get these messages out there."

NASC, as part of its Talent Acquisition Strategy, is increasing its activities to support and encourage new entrants joining the sector. The organisation is launching a three-pronged plan to support the recruitment of new talent and this will include: providing the resources for all NASC scaffolding and access employers to attend careers fairs; developing a website to work with employers, directing new candidates to those employers; and digital advertising to promote career opportunities.

NASC will be providing resources including virtual reality headsets, promotional materials and physical demonstration equipment to support members at events. Simultaneously, NASC will support new candidates by sharing information with employers, working with online recruitment sites and using social media and other channels to promote scaffolding as a brilliant career choice.



Key events

NASC will be attending the following:

- 2 November **Skills Edinburgh**
- 16 November **London Build**, where NASC will moderate a panel on recruiting prisoners
- 23 November **BFRS careers fair** in Catterick.

Minister Nus Ghani MP commented: *"The construction sector is essential to the economy of the UK, and there are great opportunities for people from whatever background to build successful careers in the industry. I welcome this initiative by the NASC to support firms to recruit new talent into the industry, and equip them with the resources to do this".*

Henry Anaffi, NASC's Training Officer, said: *"For the past few years we have worked to recruit from several channels, such as the prison service, military veterans and further education. However, the investment now being made by NASC is designed to energise the membership and give them the tools to promote the career path - it is an amazing opportunity. In November, we will be announcing the webinar briefing sessions in our e-newsletter and at our AGM and I look forward to meeting the scaffolding business leaders and HR professionals so we can support the engagement of the future of the scaffolding sector."*

NASC is looking to provide a steady stream of interest to employers within the scaffolding sector and significantly improve recruitment rates.

Clive Dickin, CEO of NASC, added: *"Scaffolding and access is pivotal to several sectors. It is a growing and sustained industry that offers a great opportunity to those who want to work in a highly technical, well paid, progressive and exciting career. It's not often that you can say you have worked at a nuclear power station, a naval dockyard or the palace of Westminster and built highly technical structures"*



“It’s imperative that NASC supports the sector, working with its members and stakeholders to promote this exciting career”

to support the building of such key infrastructure. Why would you not want to join?

“Equally there are those making an excellent living working in the domestic sector who also deal with technical challenges and great responsibility every day. We need to train people so they have the skills to be multi-skilled and flexible. Salaries for advanced scaffolders are now around £60k per year, so the rewards for hard work are there.

“It’s imperative that NASC supports the sector, working with its members and stakeholders to promote this exciting career and to broaden the breadth, depth and diversity of its recruitment. I am determined that NASC will be at the heart of a significant transformation in the recruitment of new talent into the industry.”

Free training helps address skills gaps

As part of its work to upskill, recruit and retain workers in the sector, NASC is on target to have given over £120k in 12 months to support scaffolding and access businesses to train their staff. There is a further £180k available to businesses if they apply before November 2024.

The training pot was secured by, and is the vision of, NASC President David Brown in an attempt to boost recruitment and plug the labour shortages rife within the scaffolding sector and wider construction industry.

Construction Industry Training Scheme (CISRS) and Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA) training providers across the UK are primed to offer the reduced-price training to scaffolding and access businesses with staff eligible for the training grants. In addition, some of these grants have increased since the scheme began, with up to £200 available per course and uncapped numbers of operatives being able to benefit.

NASC President David Brown said: *“We launched this training fund to assist businesses in their number one issue of 2022/2023 – recruitment and training up new staff to support their growing businesses.*

“It’s fantastic to see 30-plus businesses benefitting from the funding, with £120k now committed by the end of the year – and now there’s even more support available for our members, with increases in COTS & MHFA course payouts.

“But there’s still a big pot of money available for members to utilise and we would encourage those who have not yet claimed to make use of the training pot whilst it’s active.”

NASC CEO Clive Dickin added: *“Training is critical to the development of your scaffolding and access contracting business. NASC members can access training grants to help them build a skilful and dynamic team.”*

For further information on how to obtain this money as a NASC member, or to enquire about joining NASC to access this training fund, please call 020 7822 7400 or email enquiries@nasc.org.uk.

For further information scan the QR code below



Services & Ancillary Products Members



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

360 Degrees Consultancy Ltd
Buxton SK17 6HX
T: 07787 408544
E: karl@360degreesconsultancy.co.uk
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A

ADI Scaffold Products Ltd
Brierley Hill DY5 1TX
T: 01384 483657 E: sales@scaffoldfixings.co.uk
www.scaffoldfixings.co.uk

All Aspects Scaffolding Ltd T/A All Aspects Scaffolding Safety Services
Grays RM16 3HU
T: 01375 893590
E: info@allaspectsscaffoldsafety.co.uk
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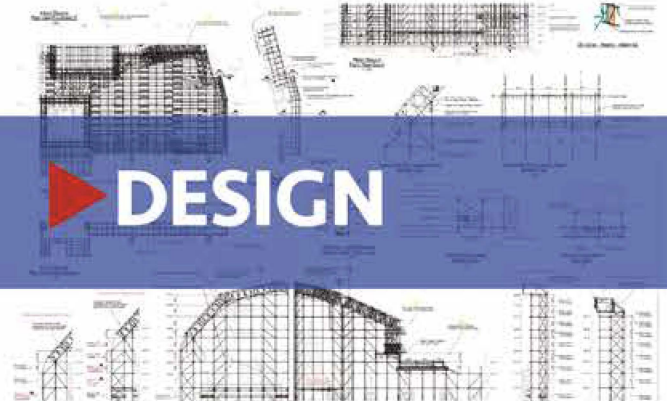


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