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## **17,800 extra construction workers needed in South East by 2027**

Against a backdrop of economic challenge, rising materials and labour costs, new figures from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) reveal that 17,800 extra workers will be required to meet construction demand in the South East of England by 2027.

CITB's annual Construction Skills Network (CSN) report shows that:

- 17,800 extra workers (3,560 a year) will be required to meet construction demand between now and 2027 in the South East
- Construction output is set to grow for all nations and regions, however, recession is expected in 2023 with slow growth returning in 2024
- Employment must grow by 0.9% annually to meet increasing demand
- The major sectors for demand are:
  - private housing
  - non-housing repair & maintenance
  - commercial

The report highlights that construction is expected to remain a sector where there is demand for workers despite the current economic uncertainty. As a result, recruitment, training, development and upskilling remain major priorities for the industry for 2023 and beyond.

CITB is responding by investing in apprenticeships, launching a range of targeted initiatives and working collaboratively with industry, to help the construction sector have a skilled, competent, and inclusive workforce.

**CITB England Engagement Director, Deborah Madden, said:** “Construction is vital in developing and strengthening our regional and national economies, and while the industry will certainly face challenges heading into the new year, our report shows there is also a lot of opportunity available for the South East.

“Despite the economic challenges, there is still huge demand for more workers in the industry, and it will become even more important to retain our current workforce over the next 18 months. There are a range of projects set to bring a steady stream of work into the South East this year, from the Lower Thames Crossing, a major project in the UK’s road network, to large housing projects in the region, expecting to span 17 years. These opportunities will deliver output for several sectors, becoming major drivers for growth in the South East.

“Supporting the industry in attracting and retaining talent from right across the South East will be our main priority, with a particular focus on training routes. There’s no denying we have a major task ahead, but I feel inspired by the resilience shown over the last couple of years and look forward to supporting industry in emerging stronger when the recession ends.”

To help directly address these challenges and maximise the opportunities which will arise, CITB has invested almost £50m of Levy to support over 22,000 apprentices to help them join the industry; while grants have helped support over 16,000 learners to complete their qualifications.

Direct funding has provided grants over 269,000 training courses and in total £97m has been invested in grant funding by CITB, to make it as easy as possible for employers to recruit and retain their skilled workforce.

CITB continues to provide targeted support to SMEs through grant and funding and through support in accessing training and funding. Since April 2022, CITB's engagement team has supported SMEs on 26,976 occasions, supporting them to continue to train during the current economic uncertainty.

In the South East, CITB has been working with employers, Training Groups and providers to support with grants, funding and wider business support. Through the direct support of CITB's Engagement Team, Kerry Murphy, founder of painting and decorating business, Decorella Ltd, has increased her confidence and expanded her skills through joining the Go Construct STEM Ambassador Scheme.

Kerry first discovered the scheme when speaking to her local CITB Engagement Advisor, Nikki Parsons. Due to her physical health, she explained how she would like to work towards doing less manual labour, with the aim of eventually moving into training and recruiting. Having faced challenges with dyslexia, the idea of delivering careers sessions and talks seemed unattainable to Kerry initially, but Nikki was on hand to reassure her and support her throughout the application process.

**Kerry Murphy, Founder of Decorella Ltd, said:** "I haven't been able to wind down as first hoped but excitingly, I have had some amazing creative projects, and dare I say, this year I will strike the perfect balance! I have loved getting involved with the scheme and I'm planning to get out there more this year. I have also signed up for more courses to help me develop and grow, and to be able to help more people onto this great career path.

"The online courses focusing on topics such as, 'Planning a Workshop' have been particularly beneficial to me, as someone starting off with little experience in public speaking. It's also been incredibly rewarding to be a part of someone else's journey, and help connect them to a career that fits with their skills and strengths."

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

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