



Press Release

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CECA: First Drop In Workloads Since COVID Underlines Need For Certainty & Pace In Delivery

Britain's civil engineering contractors today said that the first drop in workloads since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic underlines the need for greater certainty and faster decision-making across the UK infrastructure sector.

The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) has published its quarterly Workload Trends Survey for 2025 Q3, which found that workloads moved to -1% on balance, the first negative reading since 2020, bringing an end to an extended period of growth.

Activity remained resilient in renewable and non-renewable electricity, nuclear-related work, and water and sewerage, while the largest negative balances were recorded in railways, motorways/trunk roads, and preliminary works. Order books still showed growth overall, but at just +5% on balance, their weakest level since 2020.

While several parts of the market remain buoyant - particularly energy and water - weakness in key transport sectors and a loss of momentum in order books points to increasing fragility in the overall landscape of UK infrastructure. Persistent cost inflation and workforce constraints continue to apply pressure on businesses.

Commenting, Ben Goodwin, CECA Director of Policy & Public Affairs, said: "After a long run of growth, it is concerning to see workloads tip marginally into negative territory, alongside order books being at their weakest level since 2020.

"The underlying message from CECA members is not that demand has disappeared - it's that delivery is becoming less consistent, particularly in transport, and that uncertainty is starting to bite. We welcome the Government's long-term direction of travel, including the 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy and the UK Infrastructure Pipeline.

"CECA's policy work over the last year has included contributing to consultations on streamlining infrastructure planning, making the UK Infrastructure Pipeline more industry-facing, and identifying new models of private financing - all of which are interventions that will prime our sector for growth in the months and years ahead. The UK Government's priority for 2026 must be translating its intent into pace and certainty on the ground: clearer commitments, faster decisions, realistic procurement timetables, and a stronger focus on deliverability.

"Contractors are also still contending with elevated costs and continued shortages in key roles. If we want to accelerate delivery, we need a pipeline that is not only ambitious, but credible, funded, and structured in a way that makes it investable - for clients, for the supply chain, and for the workforce.

"Despite these headwinds, sentiment looking ahead remains resilient. A clear majority of firms expect workloads and new orders to rise over the next 12 months, and contractors continued to increase employment - underlining that the sector is ready to deliver, provided there is a stable flow of well-prepared, properly funded projects coming forward to market.

"The first fall in workloads since the pandemic should concentrate minds across all levels of government in the UK. CECA stands ready to work with our members, clients, and all relevant stakeholders to make sure these results are a temporary setback, rather than the beginning of a worrying trend for the UK economy."

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Notes to editors

1. The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) represents over 300 contractors of all sizes, covering approximately 80% of the civil engineering market in Great Britain. Our members build infrastructure that provides the basis for economic sustainability and quality of life in communities across the country.
2. A copy of CECA's Workload Trends Survey report for 2025 Q3 is included with this release.

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