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working for infrastructure

Press release

Immed. 21 July 2026

CECA: Dip In Civils Workloads Should 'Sound Alarm Bell' On Infrastructure Delivery

Civils contractors today said that a fall in workloads in the first quarter of 2026 should sound an 'alarm bell' that underlines the need for the UK Government to accelerate infrastructure delivery.

Results from the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA)'s Workload Trends Survey, published today, show that, on balance, 7 per cent of firms reported that workloads fell in the first quarter of 2026 compared to the same period a year earlier. Overall, 27 per cent of respondents reported that workloads had increased, one third reported that they had fallen, and 40 per cent said they were unchanged.

Despite the fall in workloads, the survey found evidence of resilience in future demand. Order books rose in annual terms, with 19 per cent of firms, on balance, reporting an increase, the highest rise in three quarters. Looking ahead, 60 per cent of British firms, on balance, expect workloads to increase over the next 12 months, while 55 per cent expect new work orders to rise and 38 per cent expect repair and maintenance orders to increase.

For CECA members, supply constraints remain a concern. More than half of firms reported dissatisfaction with the supply of skilled operatives, while 48 per cent reported dissatisfaction with the supply of staff. Tender prices also continued to rise, with 57 per cent of firms reporting higher tender prices for new construction work and improvement, and 56 per cent reporting higher tender prices for repair and maintenance work.

Commenting, CECA Director of Policy & Public Affairs Ben Goodwin said: "While it is disappointing to see workloads fall in the first quarter of the year, the wider picture is one of a sector that remains resilient and is looking ahead with confidence.

"Order books have strengthened, expectations for the next 12 months remain positive, and firms are continuing to expand their workforces. This shows that civil engineering contractors are ready to deliver the infrastructure the economy needs.

"But optimism in the pipeline must now be matched by delivery on the ground. Where workloads are falling, particularly in key areas such as preliminary works, communications, and strategic roads, there is a risk that delays will weaken confidence and make it harder for businesses to invest in people, plant and productivity.

"Under Sir Keir Starmer, the Government had has rightly identified infrastructure as central to growth, resilience and national renewal. To turn that ambition into reality, the Government it must work with clients and industry to provide clear, stable and deliverable pipelines of work, backed by efficient procurement, early contractor involvement and faster decision-making."

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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 2026 Q1 report is included with this release.

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