

Press release

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CECA: Technical Education Reform Must Create Clear Routes For New Entrants To UK Infrastructure

Civils contractors today said that the Government's plans to place technical and academic education on an equal footing are a welcome step towards developing a talent pipeline to match the UK's infrastructure ambitions.

The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) has responded to the Prime Minister's announcement that young people will be able to access new technical education pathways from the age of 14.

Under the plans, pupils will combine core academic subjects with technical education, workplace experience and contact with local employers. Schools, colleges, employers, mayors and local leaders will help design pathways reflecting the industries and employment opportunities in their areas, with the Government aiming to begin introducing the new routes from September 2028.

Commenting, CECA Director of Policy and Public Affairs Ben Goodwin said: "CECA strongly welcomes the Prime Minister's commitment to value the hard hat as much as the graduation cap.

"Historically, technical and vocational education in the UK has been treated as a secondary option, despite providing a route into rewarding, highly skilled and well-paid careers that are essential to the country's economic success.

"Civil engineering offers opportunities across an exceptionally broad range of highly-skilled and well-paid roles. Giving young people meaningful exposure to these careers from an earlier age will transform perceptions of our sector as they gain valuable real-world experience of the opportunities our sector offers.

"However, the success of these reforms will depend on their implementation. Industry must be involved from the outset in designing the new pathways, rather than simply being asked to provide placements for courses developed without sufficient employer input.

"Technical qualifications must reflect the skills that contractors actually need, while work experience must be meaningful, properly coordinated and practical for businesses of all sizes to provide.

"Young people in all parts of the UK should understand that choosing a technical route does not close down their options but can open the door to apprenticeships, further education, professional qualifications and senior positions throughout the sector.

"Skills policy cannot, however, operate separately from infrastructure policy. Contractors are more able to recruit apprentices, provide placements and invest in training when they have confidence in a stable and visible pipeline of work.

"The Prime Minister is right that Britain should value technical and academic achievement equally. We are committed to working with government, schools, colleges and regional and devolved national leaders to turn that ambition into clear and respected routes into infrastructure careers."

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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.