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Construction concerns raised with skills minister

Four construction industry bodies have asked the skills minister to reconsider the make-up of the panel chosen to select the next chairperson of the Construction Industry Training Board.

The National Federation of Builders, the Federation of Master Builders, the Scottish Building Federation and the National Association of Shopfitters have written to minister Anne Milton MP about the issue.

They argue that SMEs, including regional contractors, comprise well over 90% of the construction industry but do not have representation at the highest level of decision making.

Vaughan Hart, chief executive of the Scottish Building Federation, said: "It is imperative, that those who employ and train directly should have a majority voice in the shaping of the levy and grant system for the future.

"As a result of the burden now placed upon many SMEs to lead the way in apprenticeship engagement, their opinion and foresight must be represented."

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Scottish building organisation calls for change at UK-wide training body

● One of four groups writing to MP in bid to boost representation of SME interests

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By EMMA NEWLANDS

A Scottish building trade organisation is among a group to have asked the UK skills minister to reconsider the composition of the panel selecting the next chair of the industry's main training body, in order to help SMEs.

The Scottish Building Federation (SBF), along with the National Federation of Build-

ers (NFB), the Federation of Master Builders (FMB), and the National Association of Shopfitters (NAS), has written to skills and apprenticeships minister Anne Milton to express "disappointment" at the panel chosen to interview candidates for the next chair of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).

SBF chief executive Vaughan Hart said those who hire and train directly "should have a majority voice in the shaping of the levy and grants system for

the future". He added: "Moreover, as a result of the burden now placed upon many SMEs to lead the way in apprenticeship engagement, their opinion and foresight must be represented proportionately."

The NFB said SMEs, including regional contractors, comprise nearly 100 per cent of the construction industry but are not represented at the top level of decision-making.

The trade body added that the industry has asked the CITB to reform after the latter recently "emerged from a contentious vote on its survival for a further three years [and] received its mandate on a promise of reform. Part of

its change programme was to include greater SME representation".

NFB chief executive Richard Beresford said: "SMEs and regional contractors conduct two-thirds of the industry's training.

"It is almost inconceivable they do not have a greater say in how their levy is spent. I would ask the minister to consider how strong a message she would be sending with a more representative panel."

Brian Berry, chief executive of the FMB, said not appointing a representative from the SME sector to help supervise the appointment is "astounding and out of touch with

what the industry needs and has been calling for in recent years".

Also commenting was NAS chief executive Robert Hudson. He stated that 85 per cent of the work done in the UK construction industry is by SMEs and specialist contractors "who employ people, who train people and most importantly employ apprentices and yet once again our views are not worthy of consideration".

The organisations called for the pace of change at the CITB to increase, and acknowledged that the panel selection was not a CITB decision.

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Industry groups press Skills Minister for SME representation

Four construction industry bodies have asked the skills minister to reconsider the makeup of the panel chosen to select the next chair of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).

The National Federation of Builders, the Federation of Master Builders, the Scottish Building Federation and the National Association of Shopfitters have written to Anne Milton MP, the skills and apprenticeships minister, to express disappointment at the panel selected to interview candidates for the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) next chair.

SMEs, including regional contractors, comprise well over 90 per cent of the construction industry but do not have representation at the highest level of decision making.

The industry has asked the CITB to reform. The training body which, only in October, emerged from a contentious vote on its survival for a further three years, received its mandate on a promise of reform. Part of its change programme was to include greater SME representation.

Richard Beresford, chief executive of the National Federation of Builders, said:

"SMEs and regional contractors conduct two-thirds of the industry's training. It is almost inconceivable they do not have a greater say in how their levy is spent. I would ask the minister to consider how strong a message she would be sending with a more representative panel."

Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said:

"SMEs make up 98 per cent of the construction sector and provide the training ground for most apprentices. The failure to appoint a representative from the SME sector to help oversee the appointment of the new CITB chair is therefore astonishing and out of touch with what the industry needs and has been calling for in recent years."

Vaughan Hart, chief executive of the Scottish Building Federation, said:

"It is imperative, that those who employ and train directly should have a majority voice in the shaping of the levy and grant system for the future. Moreover, as a result of the burden now placed upon many SMEs to lead the way in apprenticeship engagement, their opinion and foresight must be represented proportionately."

Robert Hudson, chief executive of the National Association of Shopfitters, said:

"85 per cent of the work done in the UK construction industry is carried out by SMEs and specialist contractors who employ people, who train people and most importantly employ apprentices and yet once again our views are not worthy of consideration."

All four organisations agree that the pace of change at the CITB needs to increase. While the panel selection was not a CITB decision, it could be seen as an opportunity missed for a quick win to show the industry that its training board was changing.

Industry groups press for SME voice in picking CITB chair

Trade associations representing small and medium sized construction firms have voiced their disapproval of the selection process for the next chair of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).



They are upset that the selection panel that will choose James Wates' successor as CITB chairman includes no SME representatives and have written to the relevant government minister to complain.

The National Federation of Builders, the Federation of Master Builders, the Scottish Building Federation and the National Association of Shopfitters have written to Anne Milton MP, the skills and apprenticeships minister, to express disappointment at the panel selected to interview candidates to chair the CITB.

The CITB only survived its recent consensus vote under the promise of reform, including greater representation for SME, but it has now appeared to fail at the first hurdle, they say.

Richard Beresford, chief executive of the National Federation of Builders, said: "SMEs and regional contractors conduct two-thirds of the industry's training. It is almost inconceivable they do not have a greater say in how their levy is spent. I would ask the minister to consider how strong a message she would be sending with a more representative panel."

Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said: "SMEs make up 98% of the construction sector and provide the training ground for most apprentices. The failure to appoint a representative from the SME sector to help oversee the appointment of the new CITB chair is therefore astonishing and out of touch with what the industry needs and has been calling for in recent years."

Vaughan Hart, chief executive of the Scottish Building Federation, said: "It is imperative, that those who employ and train directly should have a majority voice in the shaping of the levy and grant system for the future.

Moreover, as a result of the burden now placed upon many SMEs to lead the way in apprenticeship engagement, their opinion and foresight must be represented proportionately."

Robert Hudson, chief executive of the National Association of Shopfitters, said: "85% of the work done in the UK construction industry is carried out by SMEs and specialist contractors who employ people, who train people and most importantly employ apprentices and yet once again our views are not worthy of consideration."

The panel selection was not actually a CITB decision but the four associations feel that having their voice ignored bodes ill for the prospect of change.