

29<sup>th</sup> June 2020



# CECA Wales Monday Briefing

## *Time to think of the civil engineers of the future?*

As we continue to live in the “here and now” of dealing with the fallout from this pandemic it’s easy and understandable to see why people wouldn’t necessarily be thinking of the longer term and how to attract more people to our sector. But let’s face it we don’t need to look too far to see that there’s an “ageing” profile of workers in the sector and, despite lots of great efforts, diversity of gender, ethnicity, etc, remains a challenge.

For those of you who keep a close eye on what CECA Wales are doing on your behalf (I might do a poll on this one day!) you’ll know that we’ve been working with Qualifications Wales and other partners across the broader construction sector to develop new qualifications to help us to attract more people, particularly school and college leavers, to our industry. This has been part of our strategic plan for the last 2-3 years to “attract the brightest and the best” to the civil engineering contracting sector. And there’s some good news in this regard.

A year or so ago Qualifications Wales undertook a review of our sector and we and many of our partners made a considerable input to this. To cut a long story short one of the main outputs of this review was a suite of specific qualifications in the “Construction and Built Environment” at GCSE, A-level and Foundation level (leading to apprenticeships) which will be delivered by schools and colleges giving students of all abilities direct access to and awareness of “Construction” and, in our case, “Civil Engineering”.

It hasn’t been plain sailing as, at every turn in the development of these qualifications, the “civil engineering” element has had to be reinforced and strengthened to ensure it’s not lost in a “buildings” world. As you’d expect CECA Wales has continued to “reinforce” this alongside our other partners. The first of the new qualifications, which are being taken forward by City and Guilds for the Foundation level and WJEC for the GCSE and A-level qualifications, should be launched in 2021. This will be a major step forward for our sector given how we’ve struggled to “mainstream” civil engineering as a career choice in schools.

Last week I wrote a blog for the Qualifications Wales website on my experiences career-wise and how little awareness I had of civil engineering when in school (and, yes, it was a long time ago!). Here’s two links to the blog in Welsh and English languages (and each contains another link to our CECA Wales “contracting” promo video which I hope you’ll use in your own interactions with schools and colleges) :

<https://qualificationswales.org/cymraeg/cymwysterau/adeiladu-ar-amgylchedd-adeiledig/blogiau/>

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/qualifications/construction-and-the-built-environment/blogs/>

***This has been a long time coming but it’s definitely a big step in the right direction. There’s still a lot to do and I’m currently in discussions with City and Guilds on how we can develop the detail for the Civil Engineering Operations Foundation course. If any of you would like to contribute (some of you already are I know) please drop me a line.***

## CECA Wales Political Update

Infrastructure matters in the Senedd :

- The [First Supplementary Budget](#) was passed by the Senedd. Whilst there was broad acceptance at the challenges the Welsh Government has faced during the pandemic, there were calls from several MSs to consider the medium to longer-term impact of the virus on key areas, such as domestic abuse, universities and efforts against climate change.
- The Welsh Government [confirmed](#) that Future Valleys (FCC, Roadbridge, Meridiam, Alun Griffiths (Contractors) and Atkins) has been appointed as preferred bidder for the improvement work for the A465 Sections 5 and 6 (Dowlais Top to Hirwaun).
- The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport provided a [written update](#) on broadband in Wales.
- [Alun Davies MS](#) and [Leanne Wood MS](#) called on the First Minister to invest in infrastructure and jobs plans for the Heads of the Valleys and Rhondda regions.
- The Welsh Government has allocated [funding of £15.4m](#) to local authorities to introduce measures to improve the safety and conditions for sustainable and active travel modes in their area and to achieve sustained changes in travel behaviour in the future.
- Vikki Howells MS tabled a [Statement of Opinion](#) welcoming Transform Cymru’s vision for a sustainable, accessible, and affordable and safe transport network post-lockdown.

- The Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans MS, confirmed to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee that Welsh Government financial transaction capital remains available to support the development of any [tidal energy project](#) which is both viable and represents value for money.
- The Public Accounts Committee published a report on the effectiveness of [Local Planning Authorities](#) in Wales, making 8 recommendations.
- The Welsh Government published [labour market statistics](#) for the period April 2019 to March 2020.
- On Wednesday 01 July, MSs will debate the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's reports on the [impact of COVID-19: summary of initial findings](#) and [impact of COVID-19: skills - early findings](#).

## CECA Wales Director Activities

Whilst I am still dealing with issues relating to the Coronavirus outbreak the priority of other work is continuing to grow. Here's a summary of the week :

- Hosted a meeting of the CECA Wales Executive Board
- Meeting with Transport for Wales to develop their strategy on digitising the sector and improving asset management performance
- Meeting with NRW prior to their invitation of tenders for their new all-Wales framework - we will be arranging a webinar with them shortly for members
- Issued a letter (attached) to the WLGA and council leaders across Wales urging them to prepare and publish 6-12month programmes of work to instil greater confidence across the sector and to push their officers to prepare and issue tenders for these projects as soon as possible - I will provide you with a summary of responses as soon as I can
- Attended a meeting with WGov departments, Constructing Excellence Wales and CITB Cymru to discuss their future work programmes and how this could support the sector
- Attended CECA webinars on HS2 and future rail projects
- Preparing for future webinars on politics and infrastructure, social value, the insurance market, avoiding disputes and future work pipelines

## Business opportunities

The Welsh Government has allocated [funding of £15.4m](#) to local authorities to introduce measures to improve the safety and conditions for sustainable and active travel modes in their area and to achieve sustained changes in travel behaviour in the future.

Transforming Towns funds : <https://gov.wales/15-million-covid-proof-travel>

Northeast Wales Metro funds : <https://gov.wales/north-wales-metro-investment-flintshire-electric-bus-services>

Natural Resources Wales will be inviting bids for their new construction framework. I have met officers from NRW to better understand the principles underpinning their approach and if any changes have been made following the supplier engagement sessions they held a few months ago. We will be hosting a webinar for members shortly to accompany the launch.

The Minister for Economy and Transport [announced](#) the allocation of over £16 million in transport grants to local authorities across Wales for schemes that mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. The Resilient Roads Fund of £16.9 million will support 18 schemes across 13 local authorities.

The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters MS, confirmed that the UK and Welsh Governments have agreed to approve the [Pembroke Dock Marine project](#) business case.

## Training Events

Please note that our events programme, which was temporarily suspended pending the coronavirus crisis, is now recommencing, albeit slowly. Please refer to the CECA Wales website. You can also access a range of webinars which are advertised on the CECA Covid-19 updates.

## Do you need to discuss anything?

I continue to speak to all members to understand the challenges that you are facing during these difficult times. But if you would like any more information on any of these matters or to share your views or experiences about how COVID-19 is impacting on your business, please contact me, CECA Wales Director, Ed Evans, on 07717687088 or email [ed.evans@cecawales.co.uk](mailto:ed.evans@cecawales.co.uk) .