Association for Project Management Industry Training Board Reform Response

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for the project profession, with over 45,000 individual members and over 470 corporate partners. We aim for a world in which all projects succeed because, when they do, society benefits. This response was completed by the APM Policy and Public Affairs team, with advice and guidance from corporate partners in the ECITB and CITB footprints.

Approach to ITB reform

1. Do you agree with the proposal to create a single, unified ITB by bringing together the CITB and ECITB?

   APM do not support the proposal to create a single unified ITB by bringing together the CITB and ECITB.

2. Please explain the key reasons for your answer to question 1.

   The earlier review of the Industry Training Boards correctly identifies a set of common and urgent challenges across both construction and engineering construction, including workforce attrition, skills shortages, productivity constraints, and the growing need for improved competency and quality. There is also clear merit in greater alignment of strategy, data, and delivery across these sectors. However, a full institutional merger presents material risks to effectiveness, delivery continuity, and stakeholder confidence, which outweigh the potential benefits at this stage.

   Whilst the challenges of skills shortages, aging workforce and retention issues are similar for construction and engineering construction, the sectors themselves are different. The ECITB sectors are less fragmented compared to those covered by CITB and the approach that is needed to address the challenges are different. There is a real fear amongst those within Engineering Construction that the requirements for this sector will get lost and overshadowed with the merger of the ITBs.

   Indeed within the proposal outline, the focus throughout is around construction, the construction skills mission board and housebuilding. There are broader areas of the engineering construction sector that barely get a mention in the proposal, such as oil and gas, nuclear, carbon capture and renewables, which only heightens the concern that engineering construction will be the poor relation to construction in any merger.

3. What do you see as the most significant potential benefits of a single, unified ITB and how might these be maximised?

   Notwithstanding the above, the proposal highlights several important opportunities which are supported:
   - Improved strategic alignment across both sectors
   - Greater coordination on shared challenges, particularly workforce planning
   - Efficiency gains through shared functions and capabilities
   - Enhanced delivery at sector interfaces, particularly major infrastructure programmes

   There is also strong evidence that collaborative activity is already delivering value, particularly in areas such as infrastructure skills, workforce planning, and skills passporting, however there are other ways this can be delivered through closer collaborative working rather than becoming one, unified body.

4. What do you see as the most significant potential costs and risks of a single, unified ITB and how might these be mitigated?

   Despite the benefits outlined above there are significant risks, that potentially outweigh the benefits. These include:

a) Loss of Sector-Specific Focus
   Engineering construction has distinct characteristics, including more concentrated and less fragmented markets, different workforce structures and deployment models, and exposure to highly specialised, safety-critical sectors such as nuclear, oil and gas, and renewables. As a result, there is a significant risk that, within a unified body, engineering construction priorities would be diluted or subordinated to the larger and more politically prominent construction sector, reducing the effectiveness of interventions in precisely those areas where specialist capability is most critical.

b) Reduced Effectiveness from a "One-Size-Fits-All" Model
   While the underlying workforce challenges are similar, the mechanisms required to address them differ across the two sectors. A single governance and operating model risks standardising approaches that should remain differentiated, reducing responsiveness to sector-specific needs, and weakening employer alignment within each sector. This could lead to lower overall impact, contrary to the review's stated objectives.

c) Delivery Disruption and Funding Uncertainty
   A merger would require substantial organisational transition, including the integration of levy and grant systems, the redefinition of funding criteria, and changes to programme design and delivery mechanisms. This creates a high risk of delays or disruption to funding availability, reduced certainty for employers and training providers, and the potential loss or pause of existing programmes, by diverting attention from delivery into structural change, and risk slowing progress on urgently needed interventions. At a time of acute workforce pressure, any interruption to training pipelines is highly undesirable.

d) Risk to Employer Confidence in the Levy System
   The statutory levy model depends on clear alignment between levy paid and benefit received, together with strong employer confidence in the relevance of the interventions supported. A merged body raises concerns about cross-subsidy between sectors, reduced transparency of allocation, and weakened employer buy-in. This could undermine confidence in the levy system, which remains a core mechanism for addressing market failure.

5. If you answered 'No' or 'Don't Know' to question 1, please identify any other approaches to ITB reform that should be considered and the reasons why they would be more effective in meeting the employers' construction and engineering construction skills needs.

   Rather than full structural merger, a phased and proportionate model of reform is recommended, along the following lines:
   a**.** Establish a Shared Strategic Framework
   - Develop a single, cross-sector workforce strategy
   - Agree shared priorities, outcomes, and performance measures
   - Align government, industry, and ITB roles within this framework

   b. Integrate Key Enabling Functions
   Focus on areas where commonality delivers clear value:
   - Workforce planning and labour market intelligence
   - Digital skills passporting
   - Data platforms and forecasting tools
   - Selected corporate services where appropriate

   c. Retain Sector-Specific Delivery and Governance
   - Maintain distinct sector-focused delivery arms
   - Preserve levy transparency and sector alignment
   - Ensure dedicated leadership and accountability for each sector

d. Strengthen Collaboration on High-Overlap Areas

- Joint programmes for major infrastructure projects
- Cross-sector skills pathways and mobility
- Shared initiatives for trainers, assessors, and competency frameworks

e. Review Merger in Future Based on Evidence

- Introduce clear performance metrics for collaborative working
- Assess whether deeper integration delivers measurable benefits
- Only consider full merger when evidence demonstrates it would improve outcomes without compromising sector effectiveness

Assessing the impact of a single ITB

1. Please provide any evidence you believe is relevant to the assessment of whether the proposal for a single ITB would have positive or negative impacts on individuals with protected characteristics.

   No response provided

2. Please provide any evidence you believe is relevant to the assessment of whether the proposal for a single ITB would have positive or negative environmental impacts.

   No response provided

Options for further ITB reform

Whilst not the primary focus of this consultation, we are also keen to understand your thoughts on other areas of potential future ITB reform.

1. Please provide any views on changes that should be made to the employer activities currently in scope of the CITB and ECITB to better reflect the needs of the construction and engineering construction sectors.

   Project management should be explicitly recognised within the scope of both ECITB and CITB activity. The need for project management in both the construction sector and engineering and construction sector is paramount with identified existing shortages along with sustained and growing demand. Indeed, project-related skills are increasingly recognised as vital for economic growth because they enable effective delivery across every sector. In 2024, an estimated 2.32 million full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) worked in project roles—an 8% increase since 2019. The profession generates £186.8bn in GVA each year (9.2% of the UK total), up £30.3bn since 2019, representing 19% growth.[1]

   Taking the figures from CITB construction workforce outlook, within managerial and support staff occupations, construction project managers are anticipated to be the most in demand, with growth of 1.1% per year on average over the five-year period.[2]

   ECITB's labour market forecasting tool estimated that there are 5,860 project managers working in the engineering construction industry as of 2025 (i.e. people with this specific role, rather than all project and programme professionals). The number of project managers in the ECI is predicted to increase by 22% in the next five years, reaching 7,170 by 2030[3].

   Against this backdrop, it is important that the scope of project management within the ITB system is articulated more clearly and consistently. At present, project management appears to be reflected differently across the two bodies, with ECITB taking a broader and more explicit approach, while CITB's emphasis is more closely associated with construction project management roles. Greater clarity would help ensure that employers, organisations and individuals operating within scope understand that project management capabilities are eligible for support and can therefore engage more fully with available training, development

[1] PWC (2024) The Golden Thread: A Study of the Contribution of the Project Profession to the UK's Economy. Association for Project Management. https://doi.org/10.61175/BNIP1316

[2] CITB Construction Workforce Outlook United Kingdom Labour Market Intelligence report 2025-2029

[3] ECITB Labour Forecasting tool, 2025

and professional progression opportunities. This would better align the ITB system with current labour market evidence and support the strengthening of project delivery capability across both sectors.

There is currently some really good work taking place with ECITB in relation to project management and the upskilling required, with many organisations within their footprint taking the opportunity to develop in the project profession through APM qualifications and Chartership, with positive impacts. Whilst more is needed in both sectors to meet the skills shortage, merging the 2 training bodies at this particular moment in time runs the risk of destabilising the momentum around understanding and addressing relevant skills shortages.

2. Please provide any views on whether the maximum levy period for an ITB should be extended beyond three years and, if so, what the new maximum should be.

There is a strong case for extending the maximum levy period beyond three years, subject to appropriate safeguards. A longer levy cycle would provide greater certainty for both ITBs and levy-paying employers, supporting longer-term workforce planning, investment decisions and programme delivery. This is particularly important in sectors characterised by complex, capital-intensive projects with long delivery horizons, including nuclear, renewables and offshore oil and gas, where skills needs must be planned over several years rather than within shorter funding cycles. An extended period would also reduce the administrative burden associated with frequent consensus processes, enabling greater focus on delivery and outcomes.

A five-year maximum period would offer a more appropriate balance between strategic stability and operational responsiveness. It would better align with the timescales associated with major projects and with wider approaches to periodic review and revalidation in related sectors. However, any extension should be contingent on strong accountability arrangements, including regular employer engagement and a clearer focus on outcomes-based assessment of ITB effectiveness, to ensure that a longer cycle does not reduce responsiveness to changing industry needs.

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