

CLR-GB

Newsletter 2/2007

The **CLR-GB** Office is a platform linking CLR activities at EU and GB levels as well as trade union and academic work in GB in the field of Construction Labour Research. It will support related initiatives specific to GB.
website: www.clr-news.org

Introductory Note:

If you remember, we reported from the CLR-GB Annual General Meeting the intention “to organise systematic information” about projects concerning construction labour in our network. This Newsletter is entirely dedicated to this, as a means to make these projects more effective through exchange. We are looking forward to more abstracts on what you are doing and planning. It is also possible that we organise seminars to discuss your work.

In the meantime two events have taken place at the University of Westminster on 29th March 2007, the CLR Annual General Meeting and the seminar on ‘Undeclared Labour’ including the launch of the book. You will find the reports of these events in the next issue of CLR-News.

The two offices in Denmark and Germany have also organised seminars, on 25th April 2007 in Copenhagen/DK on ‘Migrant Workers’ and on 4th May 2007 in Dortmund/D on ‘Undeclared Labour’ with the launch of the book.

We hope everybody is aware of the CLR website (above) which gives you access to all relevant information including future events.

Jörn Janssen/ CLR-GB February 2007

Health and Safety of Migrant Construction Workers in the South East, supported by the ICE

The past decade has seen a change in the composition of the UK’s migrant workforce. The consequences of this have yet to be measured but with a high incidence of non-English speakers carrying out construction activities there are important implications for health and safety. Drawing from experience on recent research into health and safety on construction projects in developing countries by Loughborough University, this project intends to examine the plight of migrant workers in relation to health, safety and welfare issues. Research activities include interviews with migrant construction workers in London and the South East, interviews with project personnel with responsibilities for health and safety, a review of labour market statistics to reveal the extent of migration in this area, an examination of the quality of skills and productivity of migrant construction workers and the generation of policy guidance for the ICE and other industry organisations.

Skills implications of innovative methods of construction, supported by CITB ConstructionSkills

The aim of this research is to establish the skills impact of the projected market growth in the use of innovative methods. This will be achieved through interviews with leading manufacturers/suppliers of innovative technologies, designers, contractors and installation specialists. We are developing skills policy recommendations for the CITB, based around an analysis of how innovative methods (and particularly offsite construction) might offset skills shortages, and the extent to which innovative methods generate new skills needs.

PhD on the relationship between skills and productivity, funded by the EPSRC and CITB *ConstructionSkills*

The student is examining empirically the extent to which investment in skills and training leads to performance and productivity improvements of UK employers. This work is.

Contact:

Andy Dainty,
Loughborough University,
Dept. of Civil and Building Engineering
Leicestershire LE11 3TU
% +44 (0)1509 223981
Mobile 07790 251458

Developing a road-map of the future capacity of manufacturing and construction in the Tyne and Wear region

People hold the key to the success of businesses in any sector! Yet, in recent times, there have been concerns that skills shortages may thwart the productive capacity of British businesses, thereby resulting in adverse effects for the competitiveness of UK economy. Approaches taken thus far to solve the skill shortages problem have been disparate and largely disconnected. Examples of such approaches include the key skills agenda of enhancing literacy and numeracy in school pupils and university graduates, issues relating to employability and work-based learning, New Deal schemes to tackle the unemployed and under-employed, employment of migrant labour, and upskilling initiatives through organisations like the Sector Skills Council, to name but a few. For employers, getting a skilled workforce is increasingly frustrating because of the complexities involved in terms of the number of enabling organisations and the cumbersome process of obtaining funding and training places. At the same time, employers are also dissatisfied with the quality of entrants coming into the industry from training and educational institutions. This is not helped by the UK government's desire to get 50% of the population into universities, and the relatively voluntarist view towards encouraging vocational education and training. In order to ensure that businesses obtains the skilled workforce they need for a sustainable future, it is imperative that the training needs and provision for the future capacity are mapped out. The proposed research focuses on the manufacturing and construction sectors in the Tyne and Wear region. The research seeks to deliver a road-map to help employers in their decision-making process in relation to engaging with the skills development agenda.

The key objectives to be fulfilled by this studentship include:

To map out the stakeholder groups (e.g. enabling organisations, training and education institutions, employer groups etc.) currently involved in the skills agenda in the Tyne and Wear region;

- To examine the effectiveness of the enabling organisations in resolving the skills problem;
- To investigate good practice available both nationally and internationally, and;
- To provide the evidence base for skills policy making in the region (and nationally).

The project is intended to provide a sound evidence base that will synthesise the numerous, disparate initiatives in combating the skills shortages problem. By mapping out the key stakeholders and examining their efficacy in resolving the situation, the project can provide greater clarity for employers in terms of where to go to develop a skilled workforce. Ultimately, the project is about appropriate engagement with employers and other stakeholders that will ensure that skills training is undertaken for ensuring the future capacity of the region's (and UK's) economy.

Methodology:

- Systematic review of the literature and skills policy;
- Focus group interviews and questionnaire surveys;
- Case study methodology, and;
- Simulation and modelling.

Deliverables:

- A series of systematic reviews for lobbying purposes;
- Good practice guidelines and case study material;
- Clearer information for employers, and;
- A simulation model (road-map) to enable employers to participate in the skills development agenda.

Contact:

Paul W Chan
School of the Built Environment
Northumbria University
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5LS
Email: paul.chan@unn.ac.uk or +
% 44 0 191 227 4219
mobile: +44 0 774 783 5506.

Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction sectors

This latest TUC report builds on a previous Northern TUC/Northumbria/UCATT joint project in the North East of England Data for this Working in the

UK report was provided by key informants from the first Northern TUC/Northumbria/UCATT project, UCATT officials in the North West and a Solidarnosc national organiser. The report has the central aims of identifying the means that Polish workers are using to find work in the sector and to document any organising strategies being used by trade unions to recruit these newly arrived workers. Using a key informant approach it identifies three main routes into employment for Polish migrant workers. These are 'on spec', 'direct company recruitment' and 'direct agency recruitment'.

The *on spec* route relates to Polish workers freely finding their own means of transport to the regions and then simply looking for work in construction as best they can. This particular route is now becoming more structured as family and friends begin to assist those in Poland, and in some cases in other parts of the UK, to find employment opportunities. For example in the North East many of those Polish workers identified in the first project had, through Polish contacts in the North West, moved to that region due to, it is believed, the higher levels of pay available. *Direct company recruitment* was only found to be in use in the North East and a fuller account of those companies involved is provided in the first project report. The overriding means of recruitment in the North West, with minimal North East use, was *direct agency recruitment*. This was reported to have taken over from the on spec route and was providing a second wave of Polish migrant workers into the region.

Trade union recruitment strategies in both regions followed a common theme, with what was described by full-time officials as typical organising strategies in use. Although, engagement with groups of Poles had been based on a number of differing approaches including using mobile phones to contact key Polish workers, who then passed on information, and visiting community centres, churches, homes and other locations that were favoured by the Polish workers. Following author discussions in Poland with Solidarnosc national and regional officials, the report sets out a number of recommendations for a strategic trade union approach to the recruitment of Polish workers which can be used for other migrant groups and other sectors.

Contact:

Fitzgerald, Ian
University of Northumbria
5 Dog Bank
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3HD
Email: ian.fitzgerald@unn.ac.uk
% +44 (0)191 227 4362

Women and Manual Trades (WAMT)

WAMT's aims to provides assistance to women and girls who wish to work or train in non-traditional areas of employment (primarily construction) in England. WAMT has been in existence for over 30 years (set up in 1975) providing advice, support and information to women. The work that WAMT undertakes is both pioneering in terms of assisting women in a male dominated sector in industry and innovative in that it finds solutions to bring about change for women of diverse backgrounds to move out of unemployment or low paid manual work into high paid work in a sector which has a desperate skills shortage throughout the country. WAMT is a membership-based organisation made up of individual tradeswomen and organisations that support WAMT's aims and objectives. The membership services that WAMT provides includes the production of a quarterly newsletter, telephone and web based help, weekly e-updates to our members, job opportunities, legislation, support and advice, networking opportunities for tradeswomen, awareness raising through events, publicity and profiling of women in these occupations, the production of a Directory of Tradeswomen and links with other organisation and employers to encourage inclusiveness. Unemployed women who have the opportunity to train and gain experience in the construction sector have a practical route out of poverty. Many women will be lone parents and will be the only adult bringing in a wage to the family. Self esteem and confidence is increased amongst this group of women which in itself will assist the family to be empowered and engaged with in society rather than be excluded. WAMT's work addresses the multiple barriers to employment for women who wish to help themselves and find economic prosperity.

We are currently running four bespoke projects which deliver specific training, advice and activities to tradeswomen and women wishing to train in construction.

The Upskill project, funded via a two-year grant from the Association of London Government and the European Social Fund under a co-financing programme.

The project has assisted by providing training and advice and supports 130 unemployed women into training or work in the construction sector in London. The project runs bespoke training including a personal safety course in partnership with the Suzy Lampugh Trust, ICT, manual handling, confidence building, self-employment courses and other accredited courses for example first aid & CSCS. As part of this innovative project sixty socially excluded women were recruited and completed an introductory DIY course in one of the most deprived wards in inner London. WAMT has a wealth of expertise to recruit, support and assist women who are socially excluded and in 'hard to reach groups'.

Further Education Women in Engineering & Construction (FEWiEC) project

One-year project funded via the JIVE partnership through the Equal programme and the DWP.

The project is a research and mapping project, which will contact every FE College in Greater London and across England to find out if there are any women lecturers or tutors or technicians in the vocational engineering or construction department.

Constructive Learning for London project

funded via a grant from the Learning & Skills Council through the College of North West London's Building One Stop Shop unit.

WAMT will be recruiting 30 women over the projects two-year life, and will through onsite assessment and training (OSAT) qualify 30 women up to NVQ level in their chosen trade.

The Building Work for Women (BWW) project

Three year project (2006/2009) funded by the London Development Agency

This project will provide work placements for 150 women by working with Construction Companies across the capital. WAMT at present has more companies wishing to take women on than we can place. WAMT has excellent industry contacts at varying levels of the supply chain from small self-employed contractors to large construction companies.

Further Projects:

We have also just received funding to run a further two projects, one of which is to assist women into self-employment and the other is to support women to gain a level 3 qualification in the trade and craft of their choice.

Contact:

Karen Procter, Director
52-54 Featherstone Street
London, EC1Y 8RT
email: director@wamt.org
% +44 (0)20 7251 9192.
Fax: +44 (0)20 7251 9193

Diversity in London's Construction Industry

This project, on the diversity performance of the London construction industry, was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Development Agency and coordinated by the Working Lives Institute of London Metropolitan University. The final report from this research was launched by the GLA in February and can be accessed via their website: www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/equalities.jsp.

Given the large amount of construction activity taking place and planned for the capital, this project is both timely and promises to be important to informing policy, in particular for the new Olympic developments.

The research addressed a number of questions through a detailed examination of recruitment, employment and working conditions on major projects, including Heathrow Terminal 5 (T5) and Wembley Stadium. These included: Why does the construction industry remain a predominantly white male able-bodied enclave, despite all the efforts made to make it inclusive? What are the real obstacles to women, those from ethnic minorities and those with disabilities entering and remaining in different construction occupations? On T5, for instance, many attempts have been made to include the local labour force and to improve diversity, including through conditions laid down in the contract, a local labour scheme, the establishment of a special training centre, direct as opposed to self employment, and trade union involvement. We found that, even despite all client encouragements and serious skill shortages, the ready supply of local labour experiences great difficulty in entering such a major construction project. The research has instead pointed to the inappropriate nature of training provision and the organization of working conditions, in particular long working hours, as lying at the root of the exclusivity of the construction industry. The conclusion drawn is that adherence to traditional practices – old-style apprenticeships, craft-based skill structures, an itinerant workforce, and intensive deployment of labour – are the real basis of the construction industry's lack of diversity.

Contact:

Prof Dr Linda Clarke
Westminster Business School
University of Westminster
35 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5LS
Email: clarkel@wmin.ac.uk
% +44 (0)20 9115000 ext. 3158

To Our Readers:

Please send your suggestions, articles, letters, etc. to

Prof Dr Linda Clarke (see above)

Or to the editors of the Newsletter:

George Fuller
119B Earlham Grove
Forest Gate
London E7 9AP
Email: george@fullerg.fsnet.co.uk
% +44 (0)20 85345352

Jörn Janssen
58 Freegrove Road
London N7 9RQ
% +44 (0)20 77007821
email: joern.janssen@btinternet.co.uk