

20th August 2020

Senedd Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau

Effeithiau COVID-19: Galwad Agored
am dystiolaeth a phrofiadau
EIS(5) COV - 24
Ymateb gan: Ymateb unigol

Welsh Parliament
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee

Impacts of COVID-19: Open Call for
evidence and experiences

Evidence from: Individual Response

To:

The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee,
The Senedd, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN.

With respect to your enquiry into COVID-19.

I am not competent to comment on medical matters or whether public bodies in Wales responded to the COVID-19 emergency effectively, but I would like to make brief comments about certain skills that I believe Wales needs if future spending to support the economy is not to be wasted.

As a former member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), now retired, I read the RICS submission with interest. I am not a fan of modern methods of construction (MMC) as I believe they are sometimes poorly designed and often poorly constructed on site. However, my main point is that the importance of competent maintenance, repair and adaptation of existing buildings is not mentioned. This sector of construction is difficult to measure but is often thought to employ 40 to 50% of the total construction workforce.

Unfortunately, it is a sector that is frequently ignored by those making policy at national level in professional institutions and government. In my view this is a mistake.

I accept the maintenance, repair and adaptation of commercial and residential buildings is a sector where 'cowboy' builders and fraudsters are too numerous for comfort, but that is all the more reason not to turn our backs but to examine this sector to see how we can improve it to benefit property owners and the many honest builders who operate in this sector. I think the Senedd should start by encouraging WAG, colleges and reputable employers to develop courses to enhance basic construction skills that may be adequate for MMC but are frequently far below the standard

required to work on existing buildings. It won't happen because the Senedd or others say it is a good idea, it will only happen if the Senedd makes it happen.

I would like to make one further point. If, as has been suggested in the media, we soon see additional spending on measures to enhance the energy efficiency of existing buildings then it is important we don't waste that money on works of poor quality or on works that are not suitable for a particular property - an example of this would be cavity wall insulation in properties in exposed locations. It is vital the Senedd listens to those who have a degree of independence, who have appropriate knowledge and experience; not to those with a product or service to sell.