



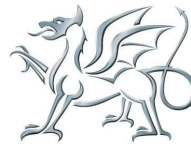
Evidence-based Evaluation and Research
Ymchwil a gwerthuso yn seiliedig ar dystiolaeth

Final Report Apprenticeship within the Building Industry

Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – Bro Ddyfi – Communities First



communities *first* **cymunedau yn gyntaf**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Prepared for: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – Bro Ddyfi – Communities First

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Table of Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	Executive Summary	3
2	Introduction	12
2.1	Bro Ddyfi	12
2.2	Communities First	12
2.3	Pathfinder	13
3	Construction Industry Background	15
3.1	The Construction Industry in the UK and Wales	15
3.2	The Construction Industry in Mid Wales	18
4	Research Objectives and Methodology	20
4.1	Introduction	20
4.2	Research Project Objectives	20
4.3	The Research Specification	20
4.4	Methodology	21
5	National Work Based Learning Schemes	24
5.1	Modern Apprenticeships	24
5.2	CITB	27
6	Local Work Based Learning Schemes	29
6.1	Pen Llŷn Apprenticeships Within the Building Industry	29
6.2	MORLO Apprenticeship Scheme	31
6.3	People and Work Unit 'Build It' Apprenticeship	32
6.4	Sheffield Rebuild	34
6.5	Maesteg Skills Centre	37
7	Employer Views	38
7.1	Introduction	38
7.2	Data Analysis Results	38
7.3	Data Analysis Conclusions	50
7.4	Employer Focus Group Results	51
8	Stakeholder Views	53
8.1	Introduction	53
8.2	Data Analysis Results	53
8.3	Data Analysis Conclusions	57
9	Young People's Focus Group Results	58
9.1	Introduction	58
9.2	Results of the Focus Group Discussion	58
9.3	Conclusions	60
10	The Future	61
11	Recommendations	62

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Economic Characteristics

The Dyfi Valley, or Bro Ddyfi in Welsh, is a largely rural area of Powys, stretching from its largest settlement, Machynlleth (pop: 2,147; Source ONS, Census 2001) at its western extremity to the village of Llanbrynmair in the east, taking in the communities of Talerddig, Abergwydol, Glantwymyn, Dolfach, Llanbrynmair, Commins Coch, Cwmlinau, Cemmaes, Cemmaes Road, Penegoes, Felingerrig, Derwenlas, Llanwrin, Ceinws, Pennant, Dylife, Abercegir, Darowen, and Aberhosan. It comprises the postcodes of SY19 and 20.

The Bro Ddyfi Communities First area includes the four wards that make up the Powys part of the Dyfi Valley (Machynlleth, Cadfarch, Glantwymyn and Llanbrynmair), and is one of the largest, most rural, and most Welsh speaking areas to be included in the Communities First programme. The area is also unique in that it is the only Communities First area in Wales that is exactly coterminous with the Local Community Strategy Local Forum area.

1.1.2 Communities First

The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for managing and implementing the Communities First programme. Altogether 142 Communities First partnerships were designated and announced during the summer of 2001, consisting of the 100 most deprived wards in Wales, along with 32 sub-pockets of deprivation, and 10 partnerships based on imaginative proposals. Communities First Bro Ddyfi fits into the imaginative proposals category, as a linked or "necklaced" group of rural communities. Communities First provides opportunities for people living in areas we term to be disadvantaged, and the agencies that deliver services in those communities, to examine the realities of poverty and to learn and work together to address it. Communities First is about supporting communities, groups and individuals to find their voices and use their skills and experiences to change, challenge, negotiate, persuade and jointly plan for the benefit of their communities.

1.1.3 Pathfinder

In December 2004 the Dyfi Valley was selected by ELWa to be the focus for one of the initial Geographic Pathfinder projects. A geographic pathfinder supports coherence and collaboration between learning providers in order to drive up the quality of learning, expand choice for learners, and create a more flexible and responsive learning network. The consultation exercise for the Dyfi Valley Geographic Pathfinder resulted in the gathering of detailed information on a range of issues and possible options for future progress. This in turn led to a final decision regarding the future direction of educational provision in the area.

In practice, this means a proposal to establish an integrated school, adult learning and community service provision. Following this decision, it was confirmed in May 2007 that £620,000 of grant funding from the Welsh Assembly's 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Programme had been awarded to Powys County Council to develop education and training facilities in Machynlleth.

1.2 Constuction Industry Background

1.2.1 The Learning Country

The strategic context for learning and skills in Wales is framed by the recent WAG strategy report (2006):

"The learning country: vision into action - the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010"

The strategy comprises two key elements that are of relevance to this project. They are:

- 14-19 learning pathways
- Beyond compulsory education – post 16 (FE and lifelong learning)

1.2.2 The Leitch Review

"The Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy" published in December 2006 reviewed the UK's optimal skills mix for 2020, in order to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, set out the balance of responsibility for achieving that skills profile, and consider the policy framework required to support it. The Review sets out vision for the UK. It shows that the UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills and recommends that it commit to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of the OECD. This means doubling current attainment at most levels of skill. The report states that responsibility for achieving ambitions must be shared between Government, employers and individuals.

1.2.3 The Construction Industry Mid Wales

Miller Research (UK) Ltd was commissioned by ELWa to investigate the skills needs of the construction sector in Mid Wales. In terms of general overall findings, Miller Research found that:

- Construction is a regional employment strength in Mid Wales, accounting for 8.7% of all employment, compared with a Wales average of 7.7%.
- The sector in Mid Wales is characterised by a high proportion of small and micro businesses, relying on multi-skilled staff and informal networks to complete projects.
- Many larger contracts are let to organisations from outside the region, which may then sub-contract a proportion of the work at a local level.
- Employment is heavily biased towards males and full-time working.
- There are local strengths in building restoration and repair and the potential for expanding green building skills in Mid Wales has been identified.
- Industry forecasts predict an overall staff requirement of 180 new entrants per year up to 2007, of which almost half are required to cover retirements. The most significant demands are expected to be for wood trades, bricklayers, electricians, managers, painters, professionals and plumbers.

1.3 Research Objectives and Methodology

1.3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives for this research project have been directly informed by community views on priorities for the Economy and Employment theme of the Communities First Bro Ddyfi process, and by and the Partnership's report relating to this theme.

These priorities were reflected in the project specification, which clearly identified the research objectives for this piece of work. These were to:

- Look at the needs of employers, workers and young people who wish to work in this field.
- Discuss with the employers and support organisations, such as CITB, whether it is possible to prepare young people better for the world of work.
- Look at the barriers to taking on an apprentice, focusing on employers.
- Look at the implications of taking on an apprentice, and how many are keen to get hold of new workers.
- Look at what steps could be taken to move things forward in Bro Ddyfi.
- Look at the advantages and disadvantages of an Apprenticeship Scheme.
- Asses the demand from young people to work in the Building Trade.

1.3.2 Methodology

Wavehill's 3-stage methodology for the work was as follows:

Stage 1 – Planning and Research Framework. This included initial briefing and planning meetings, significant desk research, discussions regarding research questions and research tools including topic guides. Following these initial planning meetings, Wavehill developed a research framework to include stages, milestones, outputs, and delivery dates.

Stage 2 – Research and Fieldwork. This involved a wide range of interviews with the key stakeholders such as local businesses, local / regional support organisations, and local young people. Interviews were conducted either face to face or by telephone, or through a focus group format.

Stage 3 – Reporting. Wavehill updated the steering group throughout the evaluation process. Data analysis was completed in April, followed by a draft report presented to the Partnership in May. Feedback on the draft report was received in mid June, with the final report prepared in June 2007. A final presentation to external stakeholders was then given in July 2007.

1.4 Employer Views

A total of 51 interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, either face-to-face or over the telephone, during March and April 2007. Key findings from these interviews were as follows:

- The majority of interviewees (53%) had no employees, or employed only 1 to 5 people (31%).
- The majority of employers (86%) are not currently trying to recruit new employees.
- Only 12% of interviewees (6 companies out of 51 questioned) currently have an apprentice / apprentices on their books.
- Only 25% of firms use innovative or sustainable forms of constructions skills, indicating that this sector remains a potential growth area for Bro Ddyfi.

- The barriers to and implications of taking on an apprentice were seen to be: Health and safety / red tape and paperwork; Cost; Enthusiasm / attitude / willingness to learn; Lack of practical training for apprentices whilst at college / too much theory; Time; Loss of employer autonomy / freedom. Of these answers, health and safety was the response most commonly given.
- 57% of respondents feel that a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area.

Whilst there was general support for the theory of apprenticeship schemes, in practice, employers are reluctant to commit to taking on an apprentice. When work load demands increase, or additional specific skills are required, businesses seem to prefer to sub-contract as necessary, or to draw on their own informal support networks (e.g. family members).

In addition, interviewees also commented on the nature of current training provision for the industry, indicating that many felt that courses and apprenticeships in their current format are not delivering what employers want. For example, more than one employer spoke of apprentices coming on site who were lacking in basic skills, and were therefore unable to carry out simple tasks. Other employers spoke of a lack of practical experience that made apprentices a danger to have on site.

Once the results from the employers' interviews were analysed and reviewed, Wavehill decided that it would be useful to hold a further focus group to discuss some of the issues and concerns that had been raised. It was felt that this additional focus group would enable employers to get together informally, to discuss their concerns about apprenticeships and employment generally, and to discuss actions that could potentially be taken to overcome these concerns or barriers.

Of the employers / tradespeople who were invited, 15 agreed verbally to attend on the evening, but only one participant actually attended on the evening. None of the other 14 potential attendees informed Wavehill that they would not be attending. Wavehill was therefore unable to proceed with the focus group as planned, although the one employer that did attend gave a useful contribution to the wider research, and made some interesting comments regarding barriers to taking on an apprentice.

These concerns, as expressed by employers during the interview process, and as evidenced by the disappointing response to the focus group, have been used to inform the recommendations that are made at the end of this report.

1.5 Stakeholder Views

Wavehill interviewed representatives from 11 stakeholder organisations. In this instance, stakeholders are organisations that, at times, work alongside or in partnership with Communities First Bro Ddyfi. Views were sought from the Assembly Government (specifically from the Department for Enterprise Innovation and Networks [DEIN] and the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills [DELLS]), the voluntary sector, the community sector, public / private partnerships, industry bodies, and training and education organisations.

Comments from stakeholders all indicated broad support for an apprenticeship scheme. Further, a number of stakeholders also see the need to respond to demonstrated employer need. However, as previously noted, employer interest cannot be guaranteed to translate into action and, in practice, it seems that employers are reluctant to commit to taking on an apprentice.

Stakeholders also seemed to be aware of other issues that may impact negatively on Bro Ddyfi's ability to establish a successful apprenticeship scheme. For example, stakeholders are concerned about general levels of awareness of the Communities First programme, whilst also fearing that the minimum wage has impacted negatively on the viability of apprenticeship schemes in general. Further, stakeholders were also wary of the potential for employers to misuse apprenticeship schemes, by not providing an appropriate breadth of experience or training for their apprentices.

In addition, a number of stakeholders further recognised the potential benefits in training and education in the area, which will arise from the Pathfinder developments. The potential for knock-on impacts from increased levels of training in the area through the Pathfinder development could be considerable, although, as yet, it is not possible to speculate on the expected impacts.

In principle, then, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed felt that an apprenticeship scheme was a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area. However, there were reservations and concerns about the practicality and viability of such a scheme.

1.6 Young People's Views

Wavehill was able to undertake a focus group with 10 young people from Years 10 and 11 of Ysgol Bro Ddyfi. A number of these pupils were interested in a career in the construction industry, and there was also support for the concept of a locally based apprenticeship scheme. However, pupils with an interest in construction had already begun to make their own plans for accessing the industry. These generally involved advice and support from family members already in the industry, or work placements with the companies of family members or family friends. This reflects the findings of the employers' survey, which indicated that construction industry companies rely to a significant extent on informal family and friend networks to recruit employees and apprentices, and to cover busy periods (as well as employing sub-contractors as required).

1.7 Conclusions

The research underpinning this report indicates that there is some support for apprentices / an apprenticeship scheme in the Bro Ddyfi area, but this support is not unanimous, and certainly not without a range of caveats.

The research with employers indicates that construction companies in the area often rely on sub-contracting and informal networks to meet changing workload demands. Further, when apprentices are taken on, they are often taken as a result of contacts with informal networks of families and friends, rather than by contacting the CITB. This raises the issue of whether an apprenticeship scheme in the traditional sense is particularly suited to the nature of the area.

In addition, the report has outlined the perception amongst employers that the more academically able young people are encouraged to apply to university, rather than learning a (skilled) manual trade through an apprenticeship scheme or other route into the industry. This was seen as a significant barrier to attracting young people to the industry, and many employers felt that there was an urgent need to promote the industry as a viable job option for young people. The question that needs to be addressed in this instance is whether this is a job for Communities First Bro Ddyfi, or a job for central government.

If any ideas surrounding an apprenticeship scheme are to be taken forward in the area, then they must be developed slowly and progressively. However, the marked lack of interest in the employer focus group that was held to discuss possibilities indicates that even starting a small-scale scheme could be problematic.

There is clearly an issue regarding the supply and demand curve; i.e. is there enough demand from the construction industry locally to support more trained people. Whilst there appears to be an interest in the scheme from the supply perspective (i.e. the stakeholder organisations) the demand side (i.e. employers) seems to have a different opinion. It is only when there is complementarity between demand and supply that such a scheme could be successful.

Finally, if any steps are taken in the area, then they **must** link in to the recommendations contained within the Pathfinder work, especially those contained within Miller Research's work, relating to the construction industry.

1.8 Recommendations

Issue: There is general uncertainty amongst stakeholders as to how to progress the idea of an apprenticeship scheme for the Bro Ddyfi area, in whichever form it may take (if any). The lack of a clear consensus from local employers regarding this issue, as evidenced within this report, also means that a 'steer' regarding future direction is not currently forthcoming from the construction industry itself.

Evidence: Interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That representatives of the Economy and Employment Subgroup of the Communities First Partnership visit a number of other such schemes (as described within this report) to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from experience in other areas. Armed with the information gathered during Wavehill's research, such visits may help the Partnership to establish a clearer way forward. It seems from the research that local businesses are possibly too small (i.e. sole trader or family based) to support such a scheme and, unless both sides can be seen to be working in a mutually beneficial way, then there is too much risk in this project. This scheme may work very well in areas that have larger construction businesses and bigger contracts, but the question remains as to whether the Bro economy could support this project. Visits to other projects may help to clarify the elements of a successful scheme, and indicate what next steps could potentially be taken in Bro Ddyfi.

Issue: Construction industry employers within the Bro Ddyfi area are not universally enthusiastic about the potential development of an apprenticeship scheme. There appears to be a lack of awareness generally of apprenticeship schemes, as well as a number of serious concerns voiced by employers regarding the legal, safety, and practical issues connected to taking on an apprentice.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area.

Recommendation: Further work with employers is needed, in order to increase understanding / the profile of apprenticeships, and to promote the potential benefits of apprenticeship schemes. Further, it may be possible for Communities First Bro Ddyfi to: bring in specialists to give advice / assistance on recruiting an apprentice; bring in specialists to give advice / assistance on health and safety issues; bring in specialists to provide training in dealing with paperwork; deliver information evenings to bring together employers and CITB and colleges in order to enable an exchange of views regarding problems and concerns with current apprenticeship schemes, etc. Such development work could include the further exploration of the cost to an employer of taking on an apprentice, such as a review of direct wage costs, training costs, financial support from industry bodies etc, so that employers are very clear about the costs of taking on an apprentice, and therefore feel more able to make a decision based on facts. In this way, there is potential for Communities First Bro Ddyfi to act as a central hub or the central point of a network, facilitating discussion, organising training, building communication channels, and improving communication between organisations.

Issue: There is a perception amongst some employers and stakeholders that the construction industry (or other forms of skilled manual labour) is regarded in a less favourable light, when compared to the option of achieving good GCSE and A Level results, and attending university. However, the reality is that the construction industry is, and is set to remain, a viable career option for young people, both in the Bro Ddyfi area and UK-wide, as previous research carried out by a number of organisations (and cited within this report) indicates that there is a growing skills shortage in the industry.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi. Wavehill's desk-based review of existing research, prior to commencement of primary research for this report.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners explores its options for working with Ysgol Bro Ddyfi to promote manual, semi skilled, and skilled trades as a viable career option. However, this option will only be advisable if employers in the construction industry locally are willing to become more engaged in the process. If they are not engaged, young people who wish to enter the industry may well have to leave the area to access employment opportunities, which would be counter to the purpose of the scheme.

Issue: The possibility of developing construction courses at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi has been raised by a number of stakeholders. The perception is that this would allow local young people to more clearly understand the benefits of a career in the industry. This could potentially lead to the development of work trials / work experience opportunities, which could help to relieve employers of some of their worries regarding being 'stuck' with an unsuitable apprentice (although there would be a number of significant health and safety issues to be overcome with such a scheme).

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners explore its options for working with Ysgol Bro Ddyfi to develop construction courses. However, this option will only be advisable if employers in the construction industry locally are willing to become more engaged in the process. In addition, any developments in terms of construction courses would need to be in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's Pathfinder recommendations.

Issue: When asked what they felt were the most important qualities in an employee, employers were most interested in: enthusiasm, willingness to learn, a good attitude to customers, and a good attitude to work and the employer. These are fairly basic workplace skills and attributes, rather than specific building industry knowledge or experience.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: It may be possible for Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners to develop training courses / awareness raising sessions that explore the importance of basic workplace attributes and behaviours. These seminars could be delivered to young people in order to better prepare them for work. Such training sessions need not be confined to the construction industry, as Wavehill's previous evaluation experience indicates that attitude / willingness to learn etc are seen by employers as desirable attributes in an employee across all sectors. The Communities First Partnership in the Pen Llŷn area has been involved in similar direct delivery, and could potentially offer advice for the Partnership in the Bro Ddyfi area.

Issue: It may be useful to undertake further research into a shared apprenticeship scheme for the area, potentially bringing in other sectors such as engineering, agriculture etc. Widening the scope of a potential apprenticeship scheme in this way may help to garner more local interest. Wavehill had hoped to discuss this possibility with a group of construction employers in Bro Ddyfi, but was prevented from doing so by the poor response to the invitation to a focus group.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi carefully considers whether further research would be of use at this stage, or whether this should be held off until a later date.

Issue: A great deal of strategically-led research, in terms of consolidation and improvement of training delivery, has already been developed within the Bro Ddyfi area by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi. Wavehill's desk-based review of existing research developments, prior to commencement of primary research for this report.

Recommendation: That any and all actions taken by Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners must link in to the recommendations contained within the Pathfinder work, especially those contained within Miller Research's report relating to the construction industry. Whilst there does not seem to be an overwhelming demand from employers within the Bro Ddyfi area for a construction industry apprenticeship scheme concentrated specifically on the Bro Ddyfi area, this does not mean that there is not still an option to develop the idea over a wider area (i.e. mid Wales) as described within the Miller Report. The handful of Bro Ddyfi employers who seemed genuinely interested in the idea of such a scheme, along with the young people who were also interested, could link into such a wider based scheme, and therefore not lose out due to the lack of a Bro Ddyfi specific scheme. Therefore, Wavehill feels that Communities First Bro Ddyfi should continue to maintain strong links with the Pathfinder developments, in order to ensure that any scheme taken forward can be accessed by local employers and young people.

2. Introduction

2.1 Bro Ddyfi – key socio-economic indicators

The Dyfi Valley, or Bro Ddyfi in Welsh, is a largely rural area of Powys, stretching from its largest settlement, Machynlleth (pop: 2,147; Source ONS, Census 2001) at its western extremity to the village of Llanbrynmair in the east, taking in the communities of Talerddig, Abergwydol, Glantwymyn, Dolfach, Llanbrynmair, Commins Coch, Cwmlinaw, Cemmaes, Cemmaes Road, Penegoes, Felingerrig, Derwenlas, Llanwrin, Ceinws, Pennant, Dylife, Abercegir, Darowen, and Aberhosan. It comprises the postcodes of SY19 and 20.

The Bro Ddyfi Communities First area includes the four wards that make up the Powys part of the Dyfi Valley (Machynlleth, Cadfarch, Glantwymyn and Llanbrynmair), and is one of the largest, most rural, and most Welsh speaking areas to be included in the Communities First programme. The area is also unique in that it is the only Communities First area in Wales that is exactly coterminous with the Local Community Strategy Local Forum area.

Key statistics for the area include:

- Machynlleth itself has a 4.8% unemployment rate, compared to a 5.1% unemployment rate across Wales
- 20.1% of Machynlleth residents live in council owned housing – considerably higher than the Powys average of 10.9%.
- 55% of homes in the town are owner occupied properties in Machynlleth, compared to 69.2% for Powys.
- 15.1% of the Machynlleth's inhabitants are qualified to degree level or equivalent, compared to 18.5% for the whole of Powys and 12.4% across Wales as a whole.
- Across Powys, 31.4% of people aged 16-74 have no qualifications, compared with 33% across Wales.
- The county also has a higher proportion of people aged 16-74 who have attained level 4/5 as their highest qualification: 18.5% compared with 17.4% across Wales. (Source ONS –Census 2001).

The local economy of the Dyfi valley is dominated by agriculture and tourism, although a small cluster of sustainable eco-enterprises does thrive in the area: most notably the Centre for Alternative Technology. Regionally, average earnings in the mid-Wales area are £315.10 per week, compared with a Welsh average of £352.60 and UK average of £402.50 (Source: ONS – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2004).

The Dyfi valley area is bilingual in character with some 59% of the population aged 3 and above possessing one or more skills in the Welsh language, 56% of the population are able to speak Welsh while 44% are not able to speak the language (Source ONS: Census 2001).

2.2 Communities First – background and context from a previous key evaluation report

Communities First is a response to the widespread disillusionment with grant aided regeneration schemes and their ability to deliver sustainable regeneration. The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for managing and implementing the Communities First programme. Altogether 142 Communities First partnerships were designated and announced during the summer of 2001, consisting of the 100 most deprived wards in Wales, as measured by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (which used the 1998 Electoral Division boundaries) and 32 sub-pockets of deprivation, and 10 partnerships based on imaginative proposals. Communities First Bro Ddyfi fits into the imaginative proposals category, as a linked or “necklaced” group of rural communities.

A three-year interim evaluation study was commissioned in May 2003, and was led by Cambridge Policy Consultants. The following information is taken from this interim evaluation study: for a more in-depth view of results, please refer to Appendix 1 of this report, or visit <http://www.communitiesfirst.info>

Key findings of this research were:

- The evaluators found that the Assembly Government has taken the right direction by prioritising capacity building of local community organisations and groups and individual residents to participate in the process of change as a necessary pre-condition for regeneration.
- The evaluators found that the Assembly Government, after a difficult start, has managed to create a structure and framework with guidance through which partnerships could achieve community engagement and a platform from which now they will be able to engage with partners.
- The evaluators found that programme bending should be a process to get local authorities, other agencies delivering statutory services and those organisations that work in deprived communities, to understand the reasons for the apparent higher cost of working in these areas (e.g. higher unit cost of provision in deprived areas due to remoteness etc, higher incidence of problems, significant number of residents who face multiple disadvantages, etc)The evaluators found that the core team in the Assembly Government was inadequately staffed in the first three and a half years of the programme (April 2001 to September 2004). In addition, none of the staff were trained for community development work and so were not able to provide the kind of support that Communities First co-ordinators and partnerships needed.
- The evaluators found that grant recipient bodies find it difficult to balance the roles of accountable body, support body and a leadership body.
- The evaluators found that Co-ordinators did not have any induction training for their job. The co-ordinators role can be a difficult and stressful job and requires a wide variety of skills, and this has contributed to quite high levels of staff turnover in some areas.

2.3 Pathfinder

In December 2004 the Dyfi Valley was selected by ELWa to be the focus for one of the initial Geographic Pathfinder projects. A geographic pathfinder supports coherence and collaboration between learning providers in order to drive up the quality of learning, expand choice for learners, create a more flexible and responsive learning network, minimise nugatory competition, and contribute towards parity of esteem.

The Communities First Partnership in Bro Ddyfi was involved in discussions with ELWa from the outset, and was able to share information gathered from its community consultations. Following further work with ELWa, a number of issues were identified. For example, Bro Ddyfi is a rural and isolated area, with underdeveloped road infrastructure and public transport provision across the area, thereby making travel around the area and between centres difficult.

The consultation exercise for the Dyfi Valley Geographic Pathfinder resulted in the gathering of detailed information on a range of issues and possible options for future progress. This in turn led to a final decision regarding the future direction of educational provision in the area, which the Bro Ddyfi Partnership was also in favour of. The decision taken was as follows:

To integrate all post-11 secondary, A Level, vocational, community learning and adult learning provision as well as wider community services together under one consortium. This would include all post-11 learning providers who deliver to both secondary and adult learners in the area. There would be an element of co-location of services at a dedicated learning centre but other providers and services would be included in a wider federation or formal consortium model of delivery. This would create a broad based community learning centre. New management and governance arrangements are likely to be involved.

In practice, this means a proposal to establish an integrated school, adult learning and community service provision. It would involve a dedicated learning centre covering all post -11 learning in the area and include a wider confederation or consortium model of delivery. Ideally all the services would be co-located on one site, but where this is not practical the emphasis would be on joining up services through co-operation, sharing of staff etc. The model would be evolutionary as more elements could be co-located as older buildings become obsolete.

The Welsh Assembly Government is developing the concept of community focused schools, providing a range of services and activities to meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community, thus this entity would deliver the 11-16 National Curriculum, as well as becoming a Learning and Skills Centre for post-16 learning.

To extend the range of subjects available to the school age students and to address the 14-19 agenda, the Centre will need to source new courses, by franchise or collaboration with other providers. By offering additional services, more demand should be generated which will increase participation rates and provide greater community interaction. Improvements to learning provision available locally may mean that residents are more inclined to stay within the town, reducing transport costs and supporting the community regeneration projects.

Following this decision, it was confirmed in May 2007 that £620,000 of grant funding from the Welsh Assembly's 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Programme had been awarded to Powys County Council to develop education and training facilities in Machynlleth.

For further full details of Pathfinder, please refer to Appendix 1 of this report.

3. Construction Industry Background

3.1 The Construction Industry in the UK and Wales

The Strategic Context for Wales: Learning and Skills

The strategic context for learning and skills is framed by the recent WAG strategy report (2006):

"The learning country: vision into action - the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010"

In brief, the strategy comprises two key elements that are of relevance to this project. They are:

- 14-19 learning pathways
- Beyond compulsory education – post 16 (FE and lifelong learning)

The 14-19 learning pathways – key priorities:

- Introducing new opportunities for 14-19 year olds as part of the Learning Pathways programme, to provide enhanced choice and flexibility, including attractive "employer informed" vocational offers for all abilities.
- The development of "more and better opportunities for young people to access valuable apprenticeship opportunities", partly through enabling all learners to acquire the essential skills needed for employment.
- Reviewing existing qualifications and developing new qualifications to meet needs of learners, employers and higher education in the 21st century.
- Developing the role of Learning Coaches – "adults who have been trained to help young people understand and develop their study skills and learning styles and make choices which reflect their aptitudes and potential". Raising the capacity of Learning Coaches to use Welsh as a medium.
- Piloting work-focused learning pathways, "working very closely with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)" alongside a collaborative approach between providers and other network partners and stakeholders, including Local Authorities.
- A key advice and guidance role for Careers Wales; alongside providers and Coaches.
- Flexibility for learners between schools, FE colleges and work-based learning.
- Extending the Welsh Baccalaureate, to develop breadth and key skills; essential for learning and employment.

Beyond compulsory education – post 16 (FE and lifelong learning) - key priorities:

- Improving levels of skills (and employment) across Wales and working with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to achieve desired skills levels
- Identifying and responding to employer needs; addressing skills gaps and shortages
- Addressing / overcoming barriers to learning
- Developing generic skills, including basic skills

For further details on Learning for Skills, please refer to Appendix 1 of this report.

The Building Industry in Wales

The recent Labour Market Information (LMI) report for Wales from CITB-Construction Skills (2006) highlights the following 'headlines' for the Welsh building industry; demonstrating its significance in comparison to the UK as a whole:

- Manufacturing is an important component of the Welsh economy, accounting for 18% of GVA compared to the 16% UK average.
- Total employment in the industry in Wales is expected to increase by approximately 12% during the forecast period.
- Construction output in Wales has recorded strong growth for the past three years, following two years of decline. Over the forecast period total real construction output is expected to perform fairly strongly with year-on-year growth forecast in both new and Repair & Maintenance (R&M) work from 2006.
- In Wales, the star performance between 2006 and 2010 is likely to come from the commercial sub-sector, which is forecast to rise by 5.9% on average each year.
- Wood Trades is forecast to have the largest Average Annual Requirement in Wales. Out of SIC 45 occupations, the second greatest requirement in Wales will be for Managers, although this is significantly lower than Wood Trades.
- Glaziers and Maintenance workers are the occupations with the least annual average requirement. Roofers and Plasterers also have a low annual average requirement over the forecast period.
- Construction companies in Wales are predominantly small, with approximately 94% of them employing less than 13 workers.

For further details on the industry in Wales, please refer to Appendix 1 of this report.

Wales Action for Skills Report

ConstructionSkills, in its role as a Sector Skills Council, works on behalf of the construction industry and its clients to ensure that they have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. To further this aim, ConstructionSkills has negotiated a series of sector skills agreements (SSAs), which are collaborative agreements between construction employers, training providers, and government partners. They are designed to deliver the right kind of training for employers and employees to improve the industry's performance and productivity.

The SSA for Wales aims to:

- Shape up the industry's business performance, especially in areas such as health and safety and quality, by: increasing the number of companies investing in training; developing management and leadership skills, supporting lifelong learning in construction; developing skills for sustainability.
- Brush up the industry's existing skills, bringing workers up to the industry minimum of Level 2 or equivalent, by: intensifying and widening the 'Qualifying the Workforce' initiative; developing flexible training and qualification structures for specialist occupations; assisting the effective integration of migrant workers.
- Step up the quality of qualified new entrants (of which 500,000 are needed by 2010) by: improving understanding of the career opportunities in construction; increasing apprentice completions and widening opportunities for on-site practice; improving diversity within the industry; increasing applications for construction related courses.
- Develop firm foundations to support these priorities, by: improving intelligence on skills for the future; developing a construction qualifications strategy.

ConstructionSkills is now working with the Welsh Assembly Government to prepare and publish a strategy for the construction sector. The strategy will focus on raising skills and working in partnership to meet the needs of employers and learners.

Modern Apprenticeships in Wales and the UK

Modern Apprenticeships are nationally designed training programmes for 16-24 year-olds who have left full-time education or are already in employment. They offer young people the opportunity to start their career through a combination of learning options and work experience.

Modern Apprentices either have a job placement with an organisation or they are in full-time employment. They receive a training allowance or guaranteed basic wage. On-the-job training is provided by the employer. Off-the-job training is provided by a learning provider, who also manages all of the paperwork and visits the apprentice at work at regular intervals to assess their progress.

All staff – whether they are new recruits or existing staff – are eligible to enrol on an Apprenticeship if they are aged 16 to 24 when the Apprenticeship begins. The training provider receives financial assistance towards the cost of an apprentice's training only. Most apprentices are employed by business and paid a salary that reflects their skills, experience, age and ability. A few apprentices will be on work placement with a business and get paid a training allowance.

For further details, and for a full review of Modern Apprenticeships, please refer to Appendix 1 to this report.

The Leitch Review

In 2004, the UK Government commissioned Sandy Leitch to undertake an independent review of the UK's long term skills needs. The report, published in December 2006 as "*The Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy*" reviewed the UK's optimal skills mix for 2020, in order to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice, set out the balance of responsibility for achieving that skills profile, and consider the policy framework required to support it.

The Review sets out vision for the UK. It shows that the UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills and recommends that it commit to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of the OECD. This means doubling current attainment at most levels of skill. The report states that responsibility for achieving ambitions must be shared between Government, employers and individuals.

In summary the main recommendations of the Leitch Review of Skills are as follows:

- Strengthen employer voice and rationalise the existing bodies by creating a new Commission for Employment and Skills, accountable to Government and the devolved administrations.
- Increase employer engagement and investment in skills and deliver more economically valuable skills by allowing public funding only for vocational qualifications approved by SSCs.
- Increase adult skills across all levels and all ages.
- Route all adult vocational skills funding through Train to Gain and Learner accounts by 2010. Streamline the role of the Learning and Skills Council to become a funding body and market maker.
- Improve higher level skills: Change targets and funding to encourage employer / university collaboration
- Develop world class intermediate skills and double apprenticeship volumes.
- Increase employer investment in Level 3, 4 and above qualifications in the work place.
- Build Basic Platform of Skills: Launch new 'Pledge' for employers to commit to train all eligible employees up to Level 2.

- Increase people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills to them and their families.
- Create a new integrated employment and skills system to increase sustainable employment and progression.
- Tackle basic skills development to help people lacking such skills find and stay in work.
- Develop a nationwide network of local employment and skills boards to ensure local services meet employer needs and that workers are equipped to access work.

For further details of the key findings of the report, please refer to Appendix 1 of this report.

Construction Apprenticeships Survey

In addition to the strategic reports so far examined, the CITB carried out its own Construction Apprenticeships Survey in 2002 – 2003. The survey examined learners' background including their qualifications, the course and training programme they were following, learners' career choice and the main influences on this, learners' experiences, assessment of learners' needs, learners' views on their training programme and induction, and the advice and support that the learners were given regarding their future.

From this data, a national report was produced, along with 7 area reports. The key findings from the Welsh area report can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.2 The Construction Industry Mid Wales

The Building Industry and Construction Skills in Mid Wales

Miller Research (UK) Ltd was commissioned by ELWa to investigate the skills needs of the construction sector in Mid Wales. In terms of general overall findings, Miller Research found that:

- Construction is a regional employment strength in Mid Wales, accounting for 8.7% of all employment, compared with a Wales average of 7.7%.
- Powys and Ceredigion experienced £77m of new orders during 2002, of which £32m was for housing.
- The sector in Mid Wales is characterised by a high proportion of small and micro businesses, relying on multi-skilled staff and informal networks to complete projects.
- Many larger contracts are let to organisations from outside the region, which may then sub-contract a proportion of the work at a local level.
- Employment is heavily biased towards males and full-time working.
- There are local strengths in building restoration and repair and the potential for expanding green building skills in Mid Wales has been identified.
- Industry forecasts predict an overall staff requirement of 180 new entrants per year up to 2007, of which almost half are required to cover retirements. The most significant demands are expected to be for wood trades, bricklayers, electricians, managers, painters, professionals and plumbers. At a Wales level, there are expected to be shortages of qualified entrants into wood trades, bricklaying and painting.

From its research, the Miller report made a number of detailed recommendations. These can be found within Appendix 1 to this report.

In addition to the Miller Research report and recommendations, Wavehill Consulting has itself also undertaken previous work in the Bro Ddyfi area focussing on Learning and Skills. As part of a wider programme of research on existing post-16 educational provision in the Dyfi valley and future options, ELWa commissioned Wavehill Consulting to undertake consultation with the communities of the area to their identify attitudes and views on provision.

The key results were as follows:

- All businesses interviewed, bar one, had provided training for their employees in the last three years that was a mixture of statutory and non-statutory training;
- Training in mixed settings was felt to be the most appropriate;
- Most businesses interviewed had commissioned training and generally all were happy with its quality;
- Training needs amongst the businesses' workforces was identified through formal appraisal systems for the most part;
- Most businesses felt they were likely to provide training in the near future;
- Businesses were very positive about the outcomes of training and its effect on staff performance, confidence and motivation;
- The majority of businesses had links with local schools and the community;
- Generally, businesses were reluctant to participate in apprenticeship schemes, but some felt that financial incentives would encourage them to do so;
- There was a perception amongst those interviewed that the skills levels of school leavers were poor.

4. Research Objectives and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report examines the intentions and purpose of the research – i.e. the research project objectives – and the way in which the research was carried out – i.e. the research methodology.

4.2 The Research Project Objectives

Wavehill recognises that the objectives for this research project have been directly informed by community views on priorities for the Economy and Employment theme of the Communities First Bro Ddyfi process, and by and the Partnership's report relating to this theme¹. The original project specification clearly established the background, context and objectives for the research, as summarised below:

- To develop opportunities for young people in the building industry as a possible scheme. This is one of the Partnership's main priorities.
- To address the loss of jobs resulting from the closure of Celtica, the relocation of WEFO and WTB (from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth), and the fact that the Mid Wales Energy Agency are in the hands of the receiver.
- To address the impact of low wages within local agriculture and seasonal work in the tourist industry.
- To take a more detailed look at the local possibilities that exist.
- To look at the possibility of establishing a local system using education providers and organisations such as Careers Wales to develop a local "apprenticeship" scheme.
- A need to increase work opportunities locally.
- A need to give young people an opportunity to stay in their communities.
- A need to give local businesses an opportunity to link up with young people.
- A need to ensure that the area does not suffer from a lack of essential skills in the future.

These research objectives have formed the main structure and framework for all of Wavehill's research and consultation work, and for the preparation of the draft and final report.

4.3 The Research Specification

The project specification clearly identified the research objectives, namely to:

- Look at the needs of employers, workers and young people who wish to work in this field.
- Discuss with the employers and support organisations, such as CITB, whether it is possible to prepare young people better for the world of work.
- Look at the barriers to taking on an apprentice, focusing on employers.
- Look at the implications of taking on an apprentice, and how many are keen to get hold of new workers.
- Look at what steps could be taken to move things forward in Bro Ddyfi.
- Look at the advantages and disadvantages of an Apprenticeship Scheme.
- Asses the demand from young people to work in the Building Trade.

The project was initially scheduled to run between January and March 2007, although this timescale was eventually lengthened until May 2007. The key elements to Wavehill's research and reporting approach or methodology are set out in 3 stages below.

¹ 'Main issues as identified by local people (2005-06)'.

4.4 Methodology

Stage 1 – Planning and Research Framework

Project Planning and Scoping Meetings

Wavehill undertook an initial briefing and planning meeting with the Bro Ddyfi Communities First Co-ordinator, and Economy and Employment Sub Group Representatives, in order to agree the brief and the parameters of the research project, to discuss the research context and to identify other key documents that will inform the (continuing) desk review phase. This was an important initial element of the work, as it enabled Wavehill to gain the perspectives of key individuals on the research context, approach specific issues that they consider need to be addressed during the process. Wavehill welcomed the requirement to attend meetings on an on-going basis and to present progress reports. This contact helped to shape the project and ensure that it meets the partner requirements.

Strategy / Research and Literature Review

Wavehill undertook significant desk research in the initial stages, which reviewed relevant strategy and research documents, alongside relevant Partnership documents and reports, including those identified in the scoping and planning meetings. This developed our understanding of the research context, key project issues and project objectives.

Research Questionnaires / Topic Guide Development

The initial discussions with the Bro Ddyfi Communities First Co-ordinator and the representatives of the Economy and Employment Sub Group (along with the strategy research and literature review element) informed the development of research questions (i.e. the key issues that the research is seeking to address). In addition, this process enabled us to develop research tools including topic guides (for interviews and focus groups) and questionnaires (for survey work with employers).

Develop the Research Framework

Following initial project planning and scoping meetings, Wavehill refined the methodology presented in its original tender, and develop it into a working document to meet the exact requirements of the Co-ordinator and Sub Group representatives. This research framework included an outline of the key stages, milestones, outputs, and delivery dates.

Stage 2 – Research and Fieldwork

This element formed the core of the project. It involved a wide range of interviews and consultations with the key stakeholders such as local employers and businesses, local / regional support organisations, local young people, local parents / influencers; and other strategic and regional / national stakeholders.

Sampling and Interviews

The first step was for Wavehill to assemble a database of construction firms / tradespeople in the area. The database could include employers / tradespeople that were situated either in the Bro Ddyfi area itself, or were based close by. As long as the firm undertook work in one or more of the 4 Communities First wards of Machynlleth, Cadfarch, Glantwymyn and Llanrynmair, they were eligible for an interview as part of the research process. Those included on the database could be general builders, or work in more specific trades such as electrics, plumbing, roofing etc. Wavehill also sought to ensure that a number of firms that worked within the field of sustainability and green energy were also included within the sample. Finally, Wavehill also ensured that the sample reflected the industry structure identified in the context section; based largely on very small 'micro' firms.

Pre-booked Facilitated Telephone and Face to Face Interviews (51)

Once the sample was selected, a telephone interview or face-to-face meeting was booked with the lead consultant or with one of Wavehill's trained (bilingual) community evaluators. Wavehill operates a system of pre-booked telephone interviews, prior to the interview, the interviewee receives an advance copy of the questionnaire, which allows the interviewee to prepare ahead of the interview.

Using this pre-booked method, Wavehill was able to undertake 5 face-to-face interviews and 46 telephone interviews with local construction industry employers / tradespeople.

The approach taken comprised a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, resulting in data that could be statistically analysed, alongside data that gave more of an in-depth understanding of the industry in the area.

When these initial 51 interviews proved to be inconclusive (i.e. they did not show a particularly strong wish amongst employers and potential employers to take part in an apprenticeships scheme, it was decided to supplement the interviews with an in-depth focus group or discussion session.

Facilitated Focus Group

This discussion session took place on Tuesday 8 May 2007. 15 employers / tradespeople confirmed in advance that they would attend. However, at the event itself, only one employer was actually in attendance. For further information regarding the focus group, please refer to section 7 of this report.

Stakeholder / Support Organisation Consultation Interviews

As well as the employer / tradespeople interviews and focus group as outlined above, Wavehill also undertook pre-booked face-to-face and telephone interviews with 13 stakeholder / support organisations. The representatives of these stakeholder organisations were expected to have an interest in (and perspectives on) the potential project themes and objectives. The stakeholders to be interviewed were defined through the planning meetings and identified in the research framework, and included:

- CITB-Construction Skills
- WAG (Dells and DEIN)
- Careers Wales
- Ecodyfi
- Wales Co-op Centre
- PAVO
- Powys Training
- Pen Llyn Communities First
- Representatives of the former Mid Wales Shared Apprenticeship Scheme

School / FE focus groups with young people

Finally, in terms of primary research, Wavehill was also able to undertake a small focus group with GCSE age pupils at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi. This element of the consultation enabled Wavehill to review young people's needs and desire / motivations / likelihood of working in the industry (and views of apprenticeship-type schemes).

Stage 3 – Reporting

Regular Updates

Following the initial inception meeting at the start of the process, Wavehill's lead consultant was able to provide regular updates for the Co-ordinator, usually via email.

Attend meetings / feedback to Economy and Employment Theme Group

As requested in the specification, Wavehill was also able to attend meetings of the Economy and Employment Sub Group during the duration of the project, as well as attending other discussion meetings that were called as necessary.

Analysis, Draft Report, Consultation and Feedback

Following completion of interviews and focus groups, Wavehill was able to conduct a thorough analysis of all research fieldwork and produce a Draft Report in late April. The results and recommendations of the draft report were fed back to the Bro Ddyfi Communities First Co-ordinator and to the Economy and Employment Sub Group representatives.

Final Report

Following the feedback on the draft report, Wavehill was able to produce a final report in May 2007. This final document reflected the feedback to the Draft Report, and set out a number of recommendations that had been discussed with the Co-ordinator and the Economy and Employment Sub Group representatives. The draft report was formally presented to the Communities First Partnership on 16 May, feedback was then received in mid June, with the final report prepared in June 2007.

Workshop / Seminar for Partners and Stakeholders

Finally, following the delivery of the Final Report, Wavehill led a seminar for partners and external stakeholders on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. This took place in Machynlleth in July 2007.

5. National Work Based Learning Schemes

5.1 Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships are nationally designed training programmes for 16-24 year-olds who have left full-time education or are already in employment. They offer young people the opportunity to start their career through a combination of learning options and work experience.

There are differences in terms used and framework contents for Apprenticeships in each UK nation. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Modern Apprenticeships are at Level 3. In Scotland there are Traineeships at Level 2 and in England the term Modern Apprenticeship has been changed to Foundation Apprenticeship (L2) and Advanced Apprenticeships (L3).

Modern Apprentices either have a job placement with an organisation or they are in full-time employment. They receive a training allowance or guaranteed basic wage. On-the-job training is provided by the employer. Off-the-job training is provided by a learning provider, who also manages all of the paperwork and visits the apprentice at work at regular intervals to assess their progress.

Financial assistance towards the cost of training and assessment is available from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in England, Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) in Wales or Local Enterprise Company (LEC) in Scotland.

Modern Apprenticeships provide a structured training programme for employees in a sector, combining and addressing skills needs of sectors, with general education. This enables individuals to gain wider education achievement in addition to developing the specific competencies and technical knowledge for the sector.

In Wales, the following key policy documents underpin the skills agenda:

- Wales – A Better Country
- The Learning Country 2, the Education and Lifelong Learning policy until 2010
- Wales – A Vibrant Economy, focusing on the economic development agenda
- The Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2005 (SEAP)
- Reaching Higher, a strategy for the HE sector to 2010
- People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan

The Skills and Employment Action Plan (SEAP), published in January 2005, sets out skills policy in Wales, and commits to working with the Skills for Business network and partners in Wales to deliver learning provision more effectively geared to the needs of employers.

There are a number of key differences within the Welsh Education and training system that the Skills for Business network must both respond to and influence. These include the Welsh Baccalaureate, 14-19 Learning Pathways, and Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs).

The SSDA liaises with all the strategic partners in Wales, but its primary contact is with the Skills, Business and Employability (SBE) Division which sits as part of the Lifelong Learning and Skills (LLS) Group within the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS).

In theory, apprentices can make a contribution to a business from day one. Apprentices learn while they work, so their knowledge is up-to-date, and because their training is on the job, the practical skills they gain are the ones that are right for that specific business.

Apprenticeships can offer a business training for existing staff and new recruits aged 16-24, a number of different types of Apprenticeship, and relevant training designed by business for business. The training provider will receive financial assistance from the Learning and Skills Council towards the cost of an apprentice's training only. Most apprentices are employed by business and paid a salary that reflects their skills, experience, age and ability. A few apprentices will be on work placement with a business and get paid a training allowance. In each case, the specific learning provider should support the business through the training process by working with them to set up the training programme and manage apprentice assessments. Learning providers should also be able to help businesses to recruit a suitable apprentice in the first instance.

Finally, an Apprenticeship should allow employers to invest in their business's future. By taking on an apprentice, a business can develop specialist skills to keep abreast of new technology and methods.

With such significant potential benefits available from apprenticeships, it is important to take note of the findings of relevant evaluation reports. In particular, the report *"21st century apprenticeships: End to End Review of the Delivery of Modern Apprenticeships – End to End Review Team, DfES and LSC, 2004"* contains a number of main recommendations that should be taken into account. These are:

- A new Apprenticeship should be available from age 14 and include adults
- Entry to the programme should be through the new Youth Apprenticeship, Entry to Employment and/or GCSEs.
- The New Youth programme should start at 14+ with the trainee gathering units and components which would go towards the Apprenticeship qualification.
- There should be a clear progression route through to the MAs and on to the Advanced Apprenticeships and, where appropriate, Foundation Degrees.
- There should be a visible commitment by the employer and the trainee, with a probation period of 8 weeks, as recommended by the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.
- The programme should be portable and where a trainee cannot receive all the necessary experience with one employer there should be a system developed (through an agency or group training association) whereby the trainee can move and their apprenticeship status goes with them.
- Those entering the programme should not be financially penalised.
- Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) should be given greater discretion and authority to recommend entry standards and determine the attributes needed for fully-skilled status. This needs to be matched by SSC action to secure greater employer participation in MA.
- Ensure all SSCs prioritise the development of new schemes and review existing programmes immediately.
- In line with the review of vocational qualifications and the development of unitisation and credit transfer, a simplified and more flexible Apprenticeship framework should be implemented concentrating on a sector core with a choice of components relevant to employers' collective needs. The core would cover the NVQ, technical certificate and where necessary the literacy and numeracy skills required for employment.
- For the adult apprenticeship programme, recognition for their prior experience or skills should be acknowledged and credited, allowing them to fulfill the requirement if appropriate in a shorter period of time.
- Introduce an instructor, tutor and assessor support programme to ensure quality delivery.
- For progression purposes and parity of esteem the LSC and QCA should ensure there is a process to determine equivalent values across SSCs.
- Ensure implementation of the LSC Marketing plan for MAs, Including national promotion to employers and national sector based advertising to prospective trainees.

- Explore with partners the feasibility of an innovative 'clearing house' for MAs (potentially covering promotion; matching; coaching; transfers between employers and follow-up) building on best practice in Connexions, JobCentre Plus and IAG networks and exploiting the delivery potential of ICT in recruitment.
- To ensure we can provide a total service to employers on training and development, draw up plans for using the MA network for promoting a wider range of provision drawing on the innovative delivery models set out in the skills strategy.
- Each key partner organisation to detail how they will deliver their MA responsibilities and who is to be held accountable. (LSC, SSCs, QCA, Government as an Employer, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, IAG partnerships and Awarding Bodies).
- The DfES to set up, under the chairmanship of the Minister, steering arrangements underpinned by programme and project management arrangements for MAs. These will draw together the named individuals and give priority to communicating a clear vision and brand values, creating a confident professional delivery culture, and systematic management of change.
- Each LLSC to mirror the national delivery partnership arrangements by ensuring there are named responsible owners and to detail and implement proposals, drawing on best practice for engaging employers (such as group training associations and other employer collaborations) and determining the role and funding for any intermediary bodies.
- Determine a new national simplified process for contracting with providers that cover more than one LSC or more than one sector
- LSC to establish a new business unit concentrating on working with SSCs.
- Establish a sound research base for evaluation, evidence on increased productivity, and information on trainee success, pedagogy and what works in the work place.
- Reduce bureaucracy by building on the work of Measuring Success and the Managing Information Across Partners Group to ensure that management Information is timely, accurate and relevant, especially in relation to employer involvement and progression.
- Replace the participation target for MA programmes with a more robust measure based on achievement. The new target should be based on the achievement rate for young people and adults who gain the qualification at Apprenticeship and Advanced Level. To be benchmarked against the world's best and take account of both value-added and distance travelled.
- To drive performance, data should be collected on interest, initial enrolment, completing the probation period, participation, and achievement at level 1, level 2 and level 3 advanced by sector.

The above bullet points represent the main recommendations of the document only. For full results from the "21st century apprenticeships: End to End Review of the Delivery of Modern Apprenticeships" report, please go to:

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CA776D3C-F0B6-4A7B-8B851F429E56E58B/0/21stcenturyappreticeships.pdf>

5.2 Construction Industry Training Board

CITB is the national training organisation for construction in the UK, and provides assistance in all aspects of recruiting, training and qualifying of the construction workforce. CITB was formed in 1964 as a non-departmental public body under the Industrial Training Act 1964. In 2003, CITB became the Sector Skills Council for the construction industry and became known as CITB ConstructionSkills. CITB ConstructionSkills is also the lead industry body for most construction craft and operative vocational qualifications. CITB ConstructionSkills delivers a wide range of publicly funded education and training provision, through the CITB ConstructionSkills Managing Agency, the National Construction College, and the National Specialist Accredited Centre. The provision from these three bodies is currently managed in separate CITB ConstructionSkills directorates.

CITB works with partners in industry and government to improve the competitiveness of the industry as a whole. CITB's work is driven by a rolling five-year business plan, focussed around the three major challenges facing the industry. These are:

- Qualifying the Workforce – supporting the industry in achieving a fully qualified workforce, through recruiting and qualifying new entrants to the industry, as well as qualifying the existing workforce.
- Image and Recruitment – attracting new entrants to meet the industry's skills needs. CITB believes that the construction industry needs 76,000 new entrants each year, and so works to build a positive image of construction and promote the industry as an appealing career.
- Improving Performance – developing techniques and initiatives that encourage and support employers to improve their overall performance and competitiveness (e.g. encouraging employers to consider Investors in People).

In terms of Apprenticeships, the CITB, through its Construction Apprenticeship Scheme (CAS), can help businesses to recruit the right people to specific jobs. This is done through screening of potential apprentices, and administering of a formal apprenticeship agreement between the business and the apprentice.

To take on an apprentice through the CITB, a business must be registered with CITB, and have obtained a Health and Safety check and Employer and Public Liability Insurance. The employer must also agree an Individual Training Plan with the apprentice, allow time for learning so the apprentice can attend off-the-job training, provide opportunities for related work experience to develop their skills (apprentices need proof of this to meet the NVQ requirements), meet minimum recommended pay rates for all apprentices, and encourage the apprentice to undertake further studies.

In addition, employers of apprentices are required to carry out a company induction at the start of the apprentice's employment, including a comprehensive health and safety induction, and appoint at least one Work Based Recorder to support and guide the apprentice with evidence gathering and to verify that standards have been met.

Participating employers are eligible for funding from CITB to contribute towards registrations, college attendance, and achievement of qualifications.

According to CITB's Managing Agency Service, over 445 people in Wales want to begin an apprenticeship but have been unable to find an employer². The Managing Agency service, which currently manages nearly 10,000 apprentices nationally every year, helps employers select a suitable apprentice who can play an important role in securing the future of the company that employs them, especially as CITB apprentices have already passed the necessary selection tests and have demonstrated their dedication and enthusiasm to work in the construction industry.

Currently, the CITB believes that the industry is enjoying a period of sustained growth with many high profile construction projects being planned across the UK, with the latest Construction Skills Network Report (June 06) revealing that 87,000 people are needed nationally to join the construction industry every year between now and 2010 just to meet current demand.

Again, as with Modern Apprenticeships, it is important to consider the results of evaluation reports regarding the CITB scheme. In particular, the findings of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (now part of Ofsted) report of October 2006 indicates that:

- Overall effectiveness of CITB provision was rated as Grade 2 (where grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate). CITB's leadership and management were found to be good, as were its arrangements for quality improvement, and the training it provides in construction, planning and the build environment. Its arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity were considered satisfactory
- CITB has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements, with a strong leadership focus on improving overall success rates proving very successful. Overall success rates for all frameworks have improved significantly from 23% in 2003-04 to 56% in 2005-06. Apprenticeship success rates are now good in five of the managing agency's regions and satisfactory in the others, with the managing agency successfully rectifying weaknesses identified by the previous ALI inspection
- CITB must continue to improve overall and timely success rates
- CITB must improve arrangements for the co-ordination of on and off-the-job training across all subcontracted centres
- CITB must improve the effectiveness and quality of learners' progress reviews and target-setting
- CITB must develop further the learners' understanding of equality and diversity
- CITB must implement consistent arrangements for work-based assessment
- CITB must develop arrangements to assess the levels of literacy and numeracy of candidates on onsite assessment and training programmes
- CITB must ensure that staffing levels keep pace with the range and growth of on-site assessment and training provision
- CITB must continue to upgrade existing facilities and residential accommodation (NCC)
- CITB must develop the relationships and coherence between the managing agency and CITB ConstructionSkills' inter-dependent directorates
- CITB must fully implement the work of the standards teams
- CITB must develop effective strategies to increase participation by under-represented groups

So, whilst ALI found that the CITB had provided good leadership and strategic direction and a good approach to quality improvement with significant developments in overall success rates, it must improve harmonisation and communication across departments, and strengthen its management of literacy, numeracy and language support.

² 2006 figures

6. Local Work Based Learning Schemes

6.1 Pen Llŷn Communities First – Apprenticeships in the Building Industry

The Pen Llŷn area has some similarities to Bro Ddyfi; mainly that it is a predominantly rural area of natural beauty, with underlying social and economic problems. The Pen Llŷn Communities First Partnership commissioned Iechyda.Cyf to undertake a research study into the possibilities for developing a building industry apprenticeship scheme in the area. The research was undertaken during the spring / summer of 2005 using a participatory appraisal approach. Iechyda.Cyf consulted individuals, agencies, educational establishments, young people, businesses, local societies, and statutory bodies, and then analysed the findings to produce an evaluation report.

The report found that the average age of the population was high, with 16-29 year olds particularly under-represented in the area. The report also found that local people found it difficult to locate and engage workers with specific skills (builders, carpenters, plumbers etc). The Communities First Partnership therefore felt that it would be appropriate to develop a construction industry apprenticeship scheme, in order to increase local employment opportunities, to give local young people the chance to stay and work in their own communities, and to ensure that the area would not suffer from a lack of essential skills in the future.

The Communities First Partnership therefore went on to host an evening event at Ysgol Uwchradd Botwnnog, in order to discuss the possibilities for an apprenticeship scheme. The Partnership invited students following the school's building course, local builders, the CITB, and the local Assembly Member. The evening was seen as a success, with 2 young people being offered apprenticeships with local employers, and other companies showing an interest in a local apprenticeship scheme.

However, whilst there are social and economic similarities between the Pen Llŷn area and Bro Ddyfi, there are also some differences. Most noticeably, construction industry companies in Pen Llŷn tend to be larger, with 55% having 1 to 4 workers, 25% having 5 to 9 workers, and 20% having 10 or more workers.

When asked what they found difficult about employing (or trying to employ) an apprentice, Iechyda.Cyf found that companies in Pen Llŷn felt that the main problems were:

- Difficulties in finding the right person
- Not enough interest in the work
- Apprentices having high wage expectations
- Paper work
- Health and Safety regulations
- Expenses (wages, holidays, insurance, etc)

In order to tackle some of these barriers, employers felt that it would be necessary to:

- Offer higher grants to companies taking on apprentices
- Put administrative support in place to deal with paperwork
- Have an interview process for prospective apprentices
- Have a trial period for each apprentice

Employers felt that these steps would help to tackle the problem of apprentices that were unreliable, not punctual, who failed the academic side of their course, who left early after passing the course, or who would never be appropriate for a skilled job within the industry.

Despite these concerns, Iechyda.Cyf found that construction industry employers in the Pen Llŷn area were generally satisfied with the standard of training that was available to young people through the local college, although there were some concerns that too much emphasis was placed on theoretical rather than practical work. In addition, the employers interviewed were also found to be relatively happy with the service they received from CITB, although many felt that the grants received were too low to cover the actual costs of taking on an apprentice.

Overall, Iechyda.Cyf found that local employers within the industry were positive about the idea of a local apprenticeship scheme, and felt that it may help to raise the profile of vocational rather than academic qualifications. With so many young people now going on to academic courses in higher education, employers felt that it was important to create a positive image for the construction industry, including the career opportunities and financial benefits available, in order to attract workers.

The consultants therefore recommended that:

- Vocational training should be available outside of school hours in order to enable the current workforce, as well as secondary school pupils, to access training
- Trial periods should be part of the apprenticeship scheme
- Administrative support should be provided to employers in order to decrease the bureaucratic load of taking on an apprentice
- Financial assistance to employers of apprentices should be increased
- Modern and traditional building skills should be taught
- Labourers should be given opportunities to increase their skills through training, with employers compensated for allowing their labourers to take part
- Young people need to be made more aware of the career opportunities and financial benefits that can develop as a result of construction industry employment
- Young people need to be made more aware of the fact that construction industry employment can enable them to live and work in their local area, rather than having to move away for career opportunities

Subsequent to Iechyda.Cyf's report and recommendations, the Pen Llŷn Communities First Partnership develop an 'Apprenticeship Link' scheme. This offers a 'matchmaking' service intended to bring together prospective apprentices and construction industry employers; with additional plans to lighten the administrative burden involved in employing an apprentice.

The Partnership co-operates closely with Ysgol Botwnnog, which is now offering a GCSE course in Construction, and also works with the school to offer evening classes for those who are already working in the industry.

The area is regarded as a holiday hotspot, with a high number of second homes and, subsequently, the building industry in the area is currently booming. There are over 80 construction industry companies in the area, but due to demand, it can still be difficult for home owners to engage plumbers, electricians etc to undertake work.

However, the Partnership felt that, whilst the industry presented local young people with a real opportunity to be able to stay in the area and make a career for themselves, entry to the industry tended to be through an existing social contact, family member, etc. In addition, young people were often unaware of the range of different options that were available, from surveying and architecture right through to bricklaying. Meanwhile, whilst employers seemed to be keen in principle to take on apprentices, they felt that unsuitable people were sent to them by organisations such as CITB. Employers therefore wanted to develop a system that incorporated an extended work trial, so that potential apprentices could be tested out.

The Partnership therefore developed its Apprenticeship Link scheme to match-make between employers and potential apprentices. To deliver this, Careers Wales contact the Partnership when they have young people that are interested in a career in the building industry, whilst local builders also contact the Partnership when they are looking for an apprentice. The two sides can then be matched up through a database, with Careers Wales undertaking the 'legwork' of bringing the two parties together.

The Partnership has found that the scheme is relatively easy to sustain, with employers contacted once per year in order to update the database. The Partnership itself does not actually deliver construction training, but instead works with other providers to ensure that the training needs of both employers and potential apprentices are met. However, the Partnership, through Communities First funds, has itself been able to deliver training courses to young people in areas such as manual handling and first aid, and taster sessions where industry workers talk to young people about their careers. These courses are run at the local school's CDT workshop, and this support from the school is seen as vital to the success of the project so far.

Finally, the Partnership has also developed a simple fact sheet for employers, that tries to explode some of the myths about taking on an apprentice. This fact sheet has been well-received by local employers.

Overall, the Pen Llŷn scheme is relatively low key, acting mainly as a match-making service and communication route, rather than a delivery agent. The Partnership feels that this approach is important, as it keeps cost and time implications to a minimum, which in turn increases the long term potential sustainability of the project.

6.2 MORLO Communities First Apprenticeship Scheme

Based in Holyhead, the Morawelon and London Road Regeneration Partnership (MORLO) was formally established in October 2001 as a company limited by guarantee. The MORLO partnership is funded through Communities First, and employs two Co-ordinators, two Community Development Workers, a Project Worker, and an Environmental Project Worker. The Partnership also employs two members of staff to run its Community Apprenticeship Project, and employs three apprentices.

The Community Apprenticeship Project was developed following consultation exercises with 13 to 19 year olds in the area, and a feasibility study for a Skills Training Centre, which was undertaken by Arwel Jones Associates in March '03. Research and consultation found that:

- Young people constantly move from one low paid job to another with periods of unemployment in between
- Young People want a better career choice other than 'the army or the dole'
- The labour market is such that there are low levels of demand for labour
- Labour which is required is marginal and requires low levels of skill
- The local economy requires further development, but until skills exist locally there is unlikely to be further investment into skilled job creation

The Community Apprenticeship Project was therefore developed to support young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25, into skilled jobs in the construction industry. These young people had no or low levels of qualifications prior to their involvement in the project. The project is funded for 5 years by the Rank Foundation, and is based at a refurbished sheltered community lounge provided by Ynys Môn County Council.

The project is open to local young adults aged 18 to 25, who have no formal qualifications beyond GCSE level, who are unemployed or under-employed, and who want to work in the construction industry. The apprentices are then supported through college and work placements, and are also expected to work on maintaining community projects. The apprentices work a 37 hour week, are paid a salary with pension contributions, spend two days at college, one day at a work placement, and two days working on community projects.

Apprentices can achieve up to NVQ Level 3 in their chosen trade, as well as developing soft skills such as communication and confidence. Apprentices are able to access support and guidance throughout their time with the project, including careers advice, job search assistance, and self-employment training at the end of the course as appropriate.

The MORLO partnership believes the apprenticeship scheme has shown that:

- The support that young people need is best provided within their own community
- Young people need to be given a chance to make a difference in their own community, so that they can see for themselves how they contribute to its regeneration
- Young people can be enabled to develop a positive and secure future for themselves
- Young people do not have to leave their community to find skilled well-paid work
- Young people can develop and become role models of success for others in their community
- Young people can become advocates of Lifelong Learning

6.3 People and Work Unit 'Build It' Apprenticeship

Please note that, for this section of the report, Wavehill has relied on the information contained within the interim evaluation of Build It, which was carried out by Dr Duncan Holtom in May 2006.

The People and Work Unit (PWU) is a charity based in South Wales. It was established in 1984, and uses a mixture of research, evaluation, and demonstration projects to identify and address economic and social issues. The People and Work Unit currently manages two projects, 'Build it' and 'Life Support'. Both of these projects target young people who have low or no qualifications, and gives them the opportunity and support to enable them to further their education, and gain qualifications and employment in the building trade (Build It), or health and social care professions (Life Support). The aim is to learn lessons and identify best practice from such projects in order to influence policy and practice in education and lifelong learning.

Build It is a 5-year project, which is developing a model of best practice in supporting local young people to train in skilled construction and allied trades, and preparing them to be effective members of their community. Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes in fields such as construction were and remain the main route for those unwilling or unable to pursue more academic post-16 education and training pathways. However in practice, awareness and understanding of the programme remains low, and access to the MA is restricted by the requirement to have qualifications at NVQ Level 2 and to have an employer, whilst, once on the programme, drop out rates are high.

In this context, the PWU found that they lacked the capacity to provide the support needed to help young men access and progress through the MA, and this problem provided the inspiration for the Build It project. In order to develop Build It, the PWU initiated discussions with both the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and ELWA. The CITB were supportive of the principle, but unable to work with voluntary section organisations like the PWU. In contrast, whilst Education and Learning Wales (ELWA) were interested, they were very sceptical about the apprentices' prospects for achieving NVQ Level 3, suggesting that because the project targeted non-traditional learners, it should be aiming lower. The PWU disagreed, and decided, with the support of its funders and partners, to develop the project alongside mainstream provision.

The project targeted young people aged 18-25 with no or low qualifications (below NVQ Level 2) 15 who were unemployed or under-employed (e.g. engaged in low skilled factory work) living in some of the most deprived communities in Wales. The project was developed in partnership with four community regeneration organisations and two housing associations in the area. These are Bryncynon Strategy, Penywaun Enterprise Partnership, CwmNi (Treherbert), Rhondda Housing Association, Ebbw Vale Development Trust, and United Welsh Housing Association.

In October 2002, with core funding from The Rank Foundation, The Lloyds-TSB Foundation and the European Social Fund, complemented by funding for training and equipment from ELWA and Action Team for Jobs, the project recruited 4 experienced construction workers. They undertook training in fields such as supervision skills, recognising drug and alcohol abuse, anger management and site safety, to help prepare them for their role as Team Leaders. In December 2003, the project recruited its first cohort of 12 apprentices. Following induction and team-building exercises, they began a General Construction Skills course at Ebbw Vale College.

In September 2003 the apprentices began an NVQ Level 1 in their chosen trade (plumbing x 8, brick laying x 2, carpentry x 1 and electrician x 1), for two days a week. They also began working with their Team Leaders in the community, for two days a week and with a contractor for one day a week.

In January 2005, with additional funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, the project recruited an additional 4 apprentices, giving the project 8 plumbers, 4 painters and decorators, 2 bricklayers, 1 carpenter, and 1 electrician.

The community construction workers have been able to build their skills levels through college courses, work experience, and working on community and neighbourhood buildings. All participants are now able to apply their skills and experience to help local community-led groups and organisations to develop and improve their buildings and open spaces so that they can better meet local needs, whilst also acting as role models to help address the barriers to employment and social involvement experienced by local people.

The interim evaluation of Build It, which was carried out by Dr Duncan Holtom in May 2006, presented a number of findings. These include the following:

- Team Leaders are at the heart of Build It. They provide both practical and pastoral support to help the apprentices develop the human capital – qualifications at NVQ Level 2 and 3, skills, attitudes and beliefs and good health – necessary to access and sustain well-paid, highly skilled employment for the rest of their lives.
- By working with some of the most disadvantaged people within these communities and enabling them to succeed, the project also aims to challenge and ultimately change their communities' expectations of what is possible for young people, who have left school with no or low qualifications, to achieve.

- The helping hand that the project can give to the apprentices it works with, and the communities it works in, are central to the project's success.
- The structure of Build It enables project workers to build very strong relationships of trust with apprentices, working closely with them over many years.

Interviews with Team Leaders, contractors and apprentices themselves all demonstrated that at the start of the project, none of the apprentices on the project had the human capital they would need to succeed. All lacked the vocational and practical skills they would need. Most had weak emotional intelligence and a few suffered from poor physical health. Since this starting point, significant progress has been made in developing the human capital they needed to succeed (the journey travelled). For example:

- Interviewees consistently identified a range of personal qualities that apprentices would need to succeed, including: coping skills and resilience, communication skills, commitment, empathy, honesty, negotiation skills, the ability to prioritise, practical skills, such as the ability to price up a job and manage money, punctuality, reliability, respect for others, self-belief and self-efficacy, staying calm (not losing your temper), thinking skills (e.g. the ability to analyse, synthesise, evaluate and reflect), understanding of what they needed to do to achieve their vision, understanding of appropriate body language, vocational skills (e.g. the ability to use tools) and the willingness to defer gratification.

Some of the qualities identified above by interviewees can be readily mapped against the current accepted definitions of 'soft skills'. For example, communication skills are examples of key work skills; motivation and self-efficacy are examples of attitudinal skills; punctuality and reliability are examples of personal skills; and the ability to price up a job and manage money, are examples of practical skills. Other qualities identified by interviewees can be mapped against the five accepted domains of emotional intelligence (i.e. self-awareness, mood-management, empathy, handling relationships, and self-motivation).

From the perspective of the apprentices themselves, benefits were identified as enhancement to career prospects, an increase in happiness and well-being, increased income compared to previous employment, and personal development, such as becoming more friendly or outgoing.

Overall, then, Dr Holtom's evaluation report indicates significant benefits for young people, arising directly from the Build It scheme. For the full version of the evaluation report, please go to the People and Work Unit website at:

www.peopleandworkunit.org.uk

6.4 Sheffield Rebuild

Please note that the following information is taken from a Renewal.Net case study. For further details, please visit: <http://www.renewal.net>

Since its establishment as a community business in the mid-nineties, Sheffield Rebuild has grown into a company with 150 employees, having secured more than £15m worth of contracts in construction, insulation and garden maintenance. Rebuild estimated that it reinvested more than £1.2 million in deprived local economies in April 2001/March 2002. It uses its contracts as the basis for quality training, which leads to direct employment with the company or placements with other contractors.

Sheffield Rebuild aims to use regeneration to give local people access to real jobs and quality training in their communities. Sheffield Rebuild's main objective is "to use regeneration and other investments to give local people access to real jobs and quality training in their own communities". Its specific aims are:

- To offer "a job not a scheme, a wage not benefits, and something around which to build a life"
- To provide "real" jobs and training for local people
- To benefit the local economy through the earnings generated
- To contribute to capacity building and creating a sense of pride and ownership by carrying out its training in real buildings
- To encourage independence and greater confidence by placing its apprentices with other contractors

Sheffield Rebuild's operations cover Sheffield and are focused on areas of deprivation such as Manor, Burngreave, Sharrow, Castle, Parsons Cross and Southey Green. Typically, these areas are characterised by unemployment rates of over 50%, with 30% households living in poverty and over 40% of children living in households with no earner.

Sheffield Rebuild was set up as a community business in 1996 in the Manor area of Sheffield. It developed as an initiative between a local building company and regeneration partnerships. Funding was provided from a range of sources including the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the European Social Fund (ESF) and training grants from the Construction Industry Training Board.

Since its establishment, Rebuild has grown into a company employing 150 people in construction, insulation and hard and soft landscaping. In addition to its construction activities, Rebuild's two trading arms - Reinsulate and Replant are engaged in insulation and horticulture, operating with no grant subsidy.

Rebuild's approach to training is designed to meet the needs of a wide range of people, including those with little or no work or training experience. New employees can follow a range of training opportunities with the emphasis on quality training time to provide extra support where needed.

The Rebuild Equal Opportunities Policy is designed to ensure that all residents of local communities in which Rebuild works can compete on an equal basis for the limited number of available training places. Apprenticeships and traineeships are available to anyone of any age living in the communities where Rebuild operates.

Apprenticeships are offered in bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, general construction operations and building maintenance. Traineeships are available in amenities and horticulture, insulation services, office administration, quantity surveying and accounts and book-keeping. These programmes offer:

- A two-to-three year long apprenticeship or traineeship under a formal training agreement
- A three-month trial period
- Site based training
- National Vocational Qualifications through attendance at college or on-site training
- The opportunity to progress onto higher qualifications
- A personal training and development plan which is regularly reviewed
- Regular performance reviews
- Personal guidance and counselling including personal support;
- The possibility of long term employment with Rebuild or another employee
- Childcare support where appropriate

Rebuild was set up as a partnership between a well-established local building company, Construction Consultants, and community projects in deprived areas of Sheffield. Strong working links have been forged with local organisations with an interest in training as a means of community regeneration. This network includes training providers, agencies funding training, supporters of training from the construction industry, employers, training councils, Local Authorities, local schools, Churches and Community Associations, Housing Associations, the Careers Service, government employment agencies and Chambers of Commerce.

In terms of achievements, Renewal.Net notes the following key outputs and outcomes:

- Rebuild and its associated companies are now established as viable businesses employing 150 people
- Since it was set up in 1996, the company has achieved a total turnover of more than £15m. This has grown from £0.5 million in its first year to £6 million in 2001/2002. Its main source of contracts are Sheffield City Council (80%) and Housing Associations (20%)
- Since it started, over 100 trainees have received NVQ qualifications (62 at NVQ Level 2, 20 at NVQ Level 3 and 19 at NVQ Level 1). Some trainees have also been awarded HNC and BTEC qualifications
- Rebuild's trainee retention rate is approximately 81% and it is estimated that some 80% of trainees subsequently secure employment
- 74% of its labour comes from the local Priority 5 areas where Rebuild currently holds contracts
- During 2001/2002 Rebuild was able to reinvest (through wages) £1.2 million in the local economies it serves and £1.7 million in Sheffield overall
- Rebuild has recently joined the South Yorkshire Construction Training Group (a consortium of construction companies) and from September 2002 has been offering accredited qualifications in the workplace (through the Learning and Skills Council)
- Rebuild has been able to successfully exploit New Deal (ILM) opportunities for its training programme.

Finally, and perhaps most usefully to Communities First Bro Ddyfi, Renewal.Net has highlighted some of the key lessons learned by Sheffield Rebuild, which can potentially offer a number of lessons to those wishing to develop a similar initiative. These are:

- Although Sheffield Rebuild was started with grant funding, it now runs like any other commercial company and has to generate revenue to reinvest in its social programmes
- Even with 'not for profit' companies, business efficiency must be achieved before social inclusion can be delivered
- Most funding streams have now dried up and this puts pressure on organisations seeking to develop a similar model, particularly in the early stages when kick-start funds are needed
- Companies should continually be on the look-out for new market opportunities
- It is essential to have good banking facilities, and for the company to foster an understanding relationship with the banker
- Companies must ensure that they have staffing resources which are sufficient in both quality and quantity
- Companies need to achieve the optimum ratios between apprentices and operatives
- It is suggested that once established, a bonus system be used to drive the company
- There should be a clear management structure with defined roles and responsibilities

It should also be noted by Communities First that Sheffield Rebuild, through its Development Officer, now offers an advisory service to groups and organisations wishing to develop construction projects using local labour. Contact details are as follows: the Training Manager, Sheffield Rebuild Limited - 0114 243 3965.

6.5 Maesteg Skills Centre

The Maesteg Skills Centre was designed to help fill construction skills gaps and improve housing conditions in deprived communities. The Skills Centre aims to help to meet the shortage of skilled construction workers and tradespeople in Wales, whilst helping local communities to maximise the benefits of Wales' first large-scale stock transfer of social housing.

The Construction Training Centre at Maesteg opened in November 2005, and by the summer of 2006, 37 learners had been recruited onto the Centre's 13-week Skillbuild programme. The Construction Training Centre now provides 13-week and 39-week Skillbuild Plus courses in carpentry, plastering, plumbing, paving, bricklaying, painting and decorating.

It has been estimated the upgrading of the stock transfer properties in the area will cost approximately £70 million over the next 5 years. The aim of the Construction Training Centre is therefore to try to ensure that the knock-on benefits of this investment impact directly on the people of the communities where the houses are located. Helping local unemployed and economically inactive people to gain construction industry skills means that they are given the ability to take up employment opportunities in their own community, working on the houses that they, their families and friends actually live in.

The training at the centre is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, through Work Based Learning for Adults (WBLA). WAG also provided £250,000 towards the purchase and refurbishment of the building, whilst Jobcentre Plus provided £125,000 and Valleys to Coast Housing (the recipients of the stock transfer) provided £80,000 towards the set up costs of the centre. The cost of legal and architects fees were met by Bridgend County Borough Council. More information regarding the Constuction Training Centre can be found at www.bridgend.gov.uk

7. Employer Views

7.1 Introduction

In this section of the report, Wavehill presents some of the key findings from its interviews with local employers / tradespeople. Only the key questions are included here; for a full version of the data analysis, with responses to all questions asked, please refer to the annexe to this report.

Please note that all interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, either face-to-face with the interviewee, or over the telephone. This ensured that each interviewee had appropriate guidance and support during the process, in order to ensure that they were completely clear regarding the meaning and interpretation of the question.

7.2 Data Analysis Results

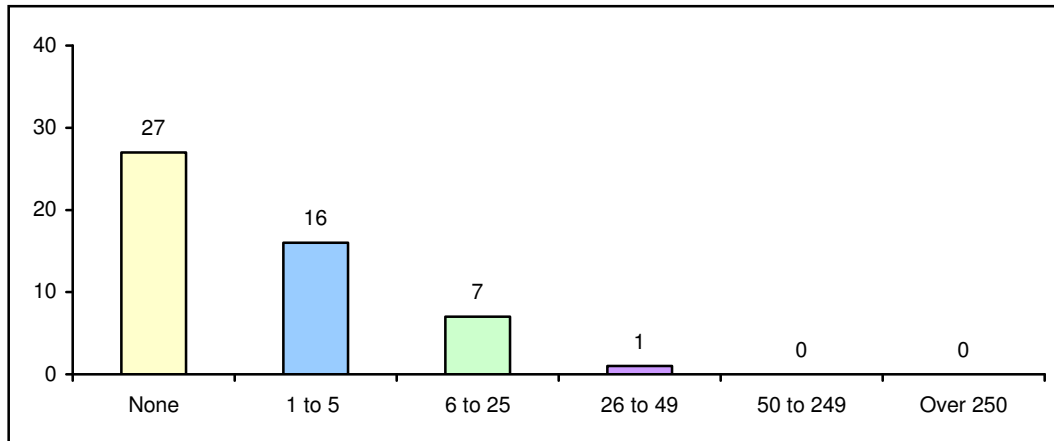
Please note that the question number (e.g. Q2) refers to the number of the question in the original full-length questionnaire, as contained within the Annexe to this report.

Q2. Please tell me a little about your business (51)

- "General Builder / Builder." x 22
- "Plumber." x 5
- "Electrical contractor." x 3
- "Builder and sub contractor." x 2
- "Carpenter." x 2
- "Carpenter and double glazing contractor."
- "Construction Company."
- "Heating / Plumbing."
- "Heating specialists."
- "House builder."
- "Wood burner installers and sales."
- "We build carbon neutral homes. We need specialist expertise and knowledge to do what we do, but we're considered to be quite marginal, I suppose. I think that the bigger players may well move in on us, so the way forward may be in architectural design and build."
- "We do renovations and new build. There are about 6 of us, and one self-employed person. We pull in other contractors as we need them."
- "Building and joinery."
- "Building new homes."
- "Civil Engineering."
- "Building and civil engineering."
- "Specialised oak frames."

As can be seen from the above responses, a significant number of interviewees (43%) described themselves as builders or general builders. However, Wavehill was able to ensure that opinions were gathered from a wide range of other trades, including specialist trades such as plumbers and carpenters, whilst also consulting with companies that dealt with sustainable technologies. This wide range of participant specialities ensures good representation across the sample.

Q3. How many employees do you have? (51)

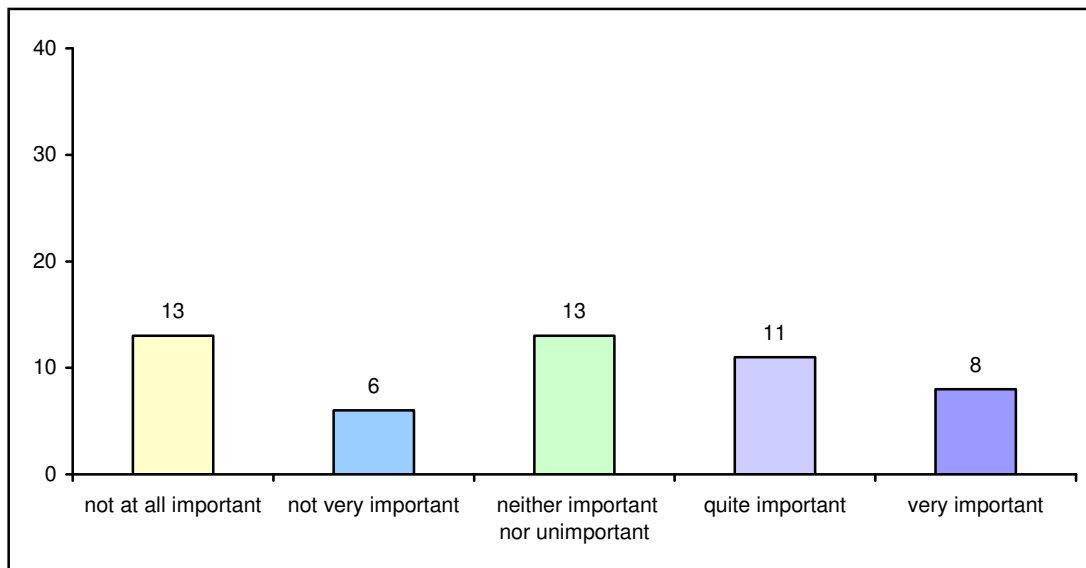


Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

As can be seen from the above chart, the majority of interviewees had no employees and are sole traders, or employed only a small number of people as micro businesses. This is an accurate reflection of the construction industry in the area, which consists mainly of small and micro businesses.

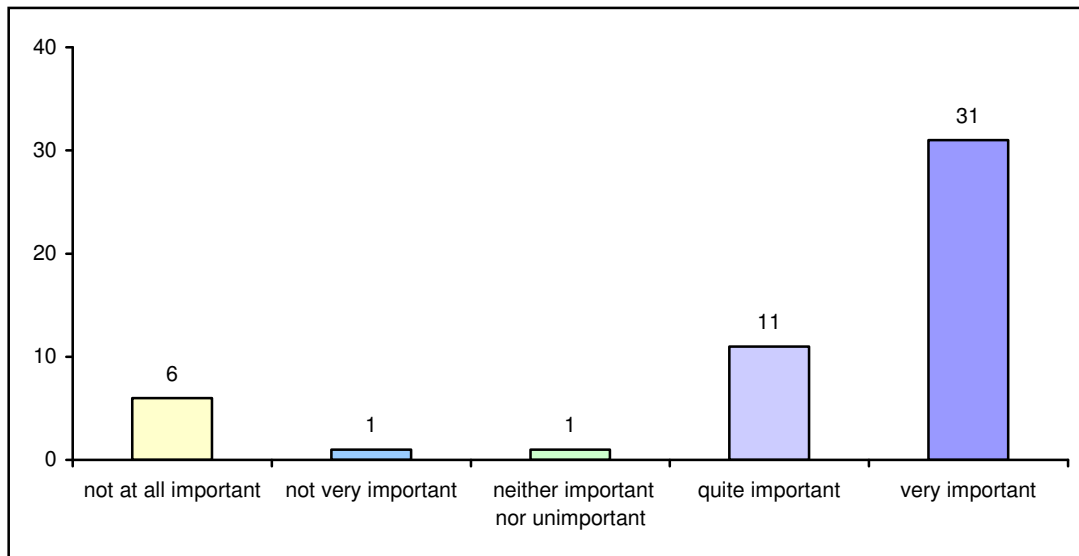
Q4. What are you looking for in a potential construction industry employee?

A) Specific construction skills (51)



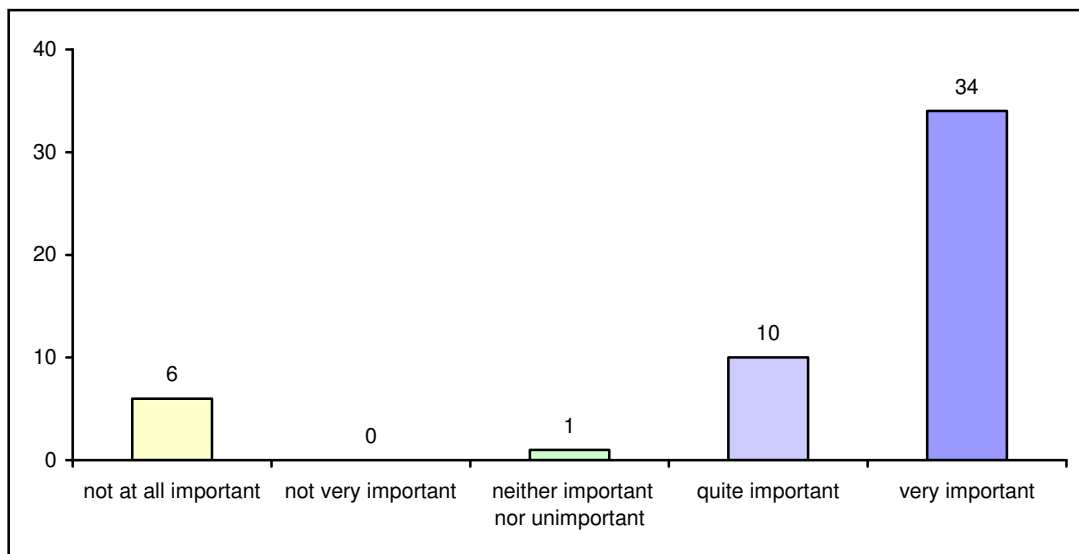
Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

B) Good attitude to work and employer (51)



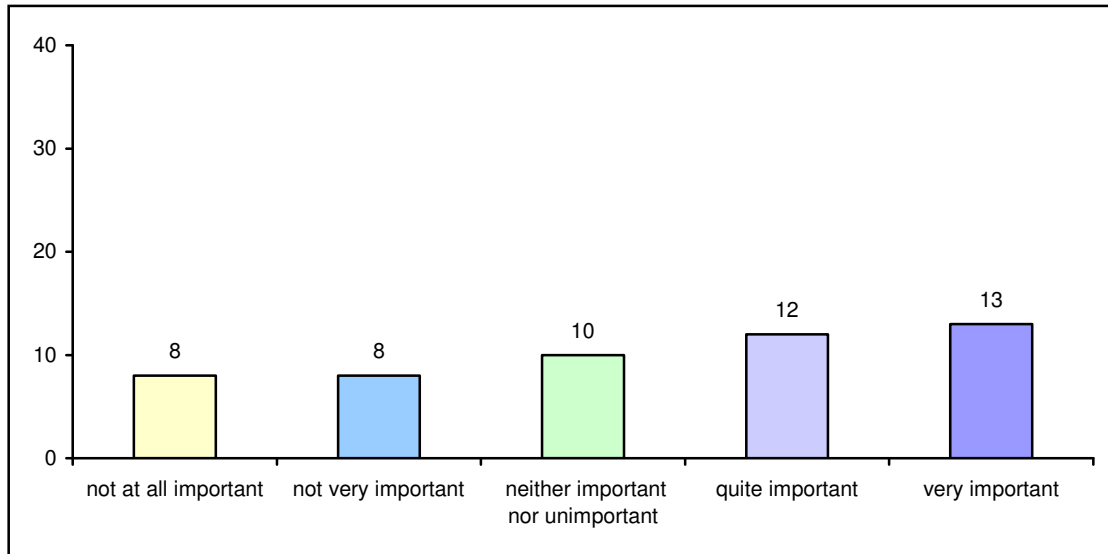
Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

C) Good attitude to customers (51)



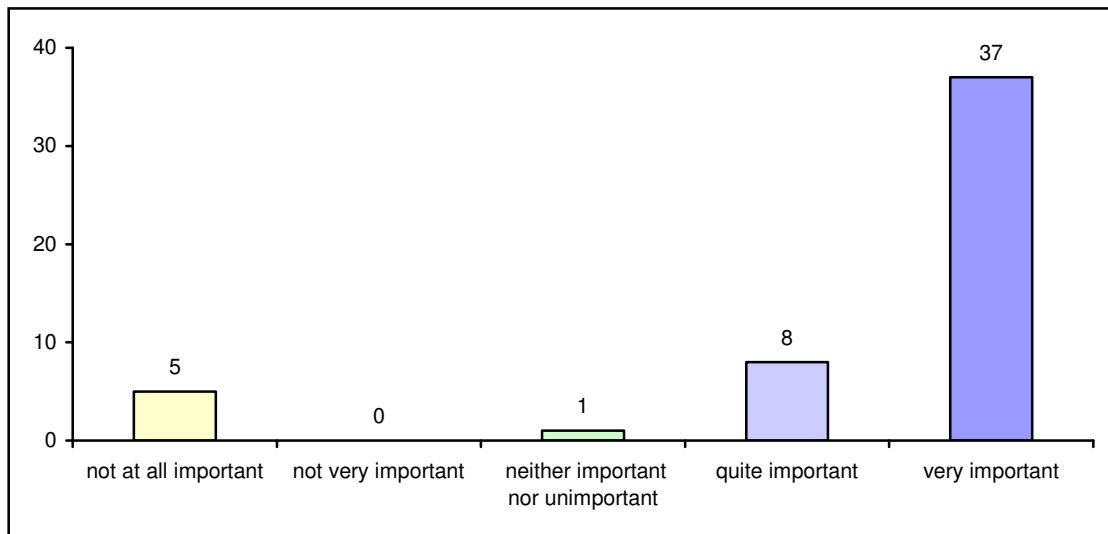
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D) Experience (51)



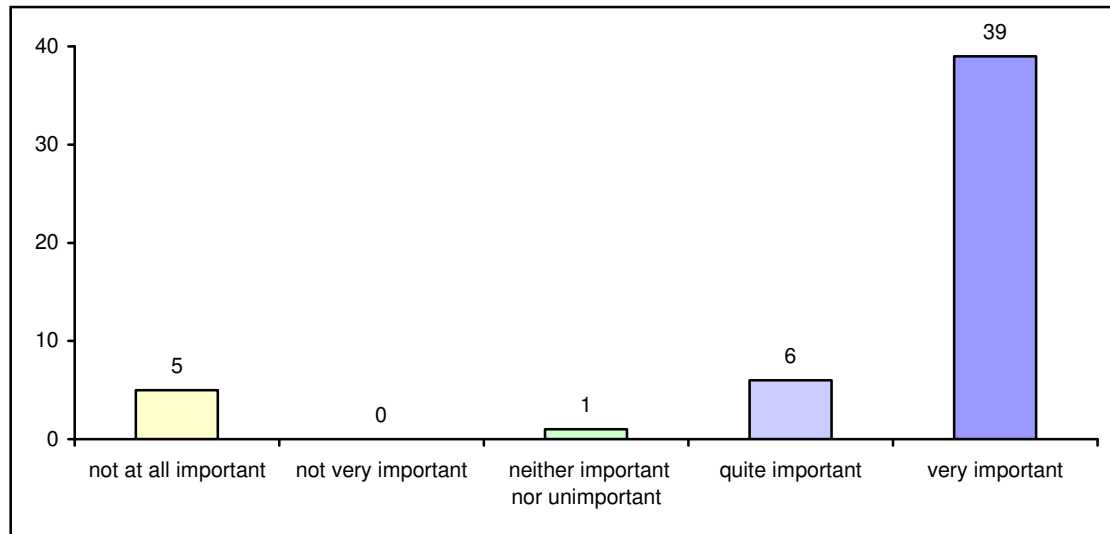
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E) Willingness to learn (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

F) Enthusiasm (51)



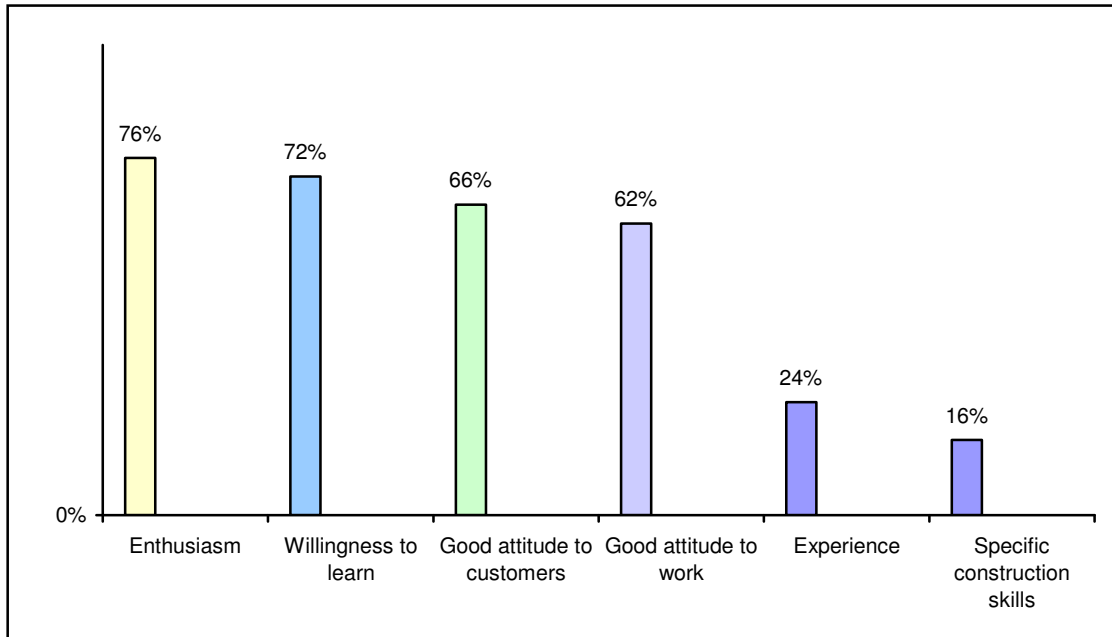
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G) Other

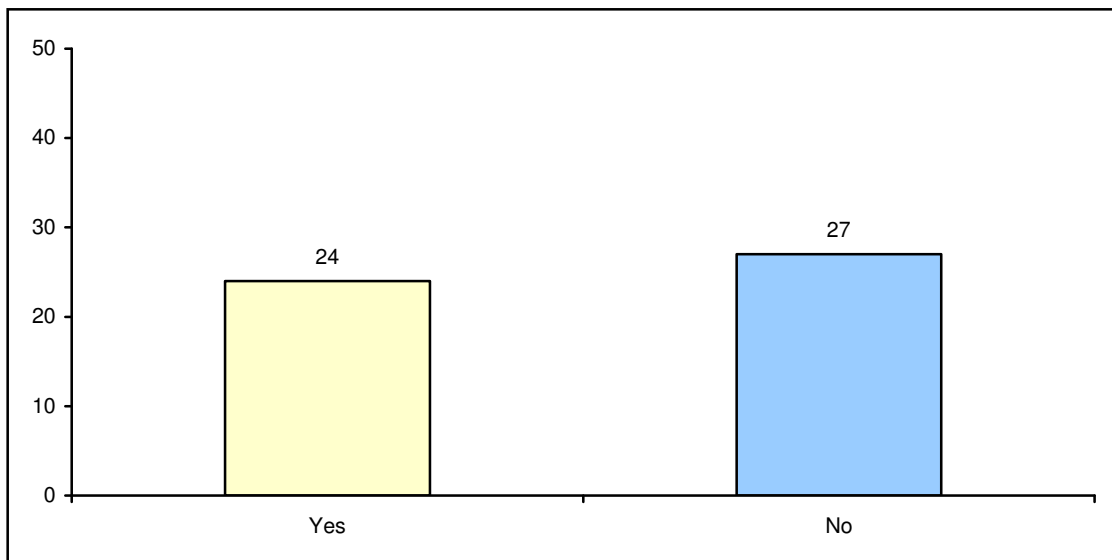
- "Not looking to take anyone on." x 4
- "Honesty." x 2
- "Punctual."
- "Trustworthy."
- "It depends on the job I want them to do. Overall, attitude is probably the most important, but sometimes its skills that you need, so I couldn't really say."
- "That's a difficult one to answer. I'm trying to recruit architectural technologists at the moment, but the nearest practice is in Wrexham. So on the one hand I'm looking for specialist skills but if I can't find them, then I may have to train someone up – and if that's the case, then attitude is more important."
- "We are definitely more interested in attitude than in skills."

From the answers given by interviewees, and presented in charts A to F above, it can clearly be seen that the key qualities that employers are looking for are enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and a good attitude. Specific skills and experience were rated considerably lower. This is a key issue arising from the research: the basic premise for an apprenticeship scheme in the area is to upskill young people to be able to take advantage of employment opportunities. However, employers seem to be stating quite clearly that the skills of employees are not their top priority. This discrepancy needs to be kept in mind at all times.

For a round-up of results from this question, please see the summary chart below for a direct comparison of scores.

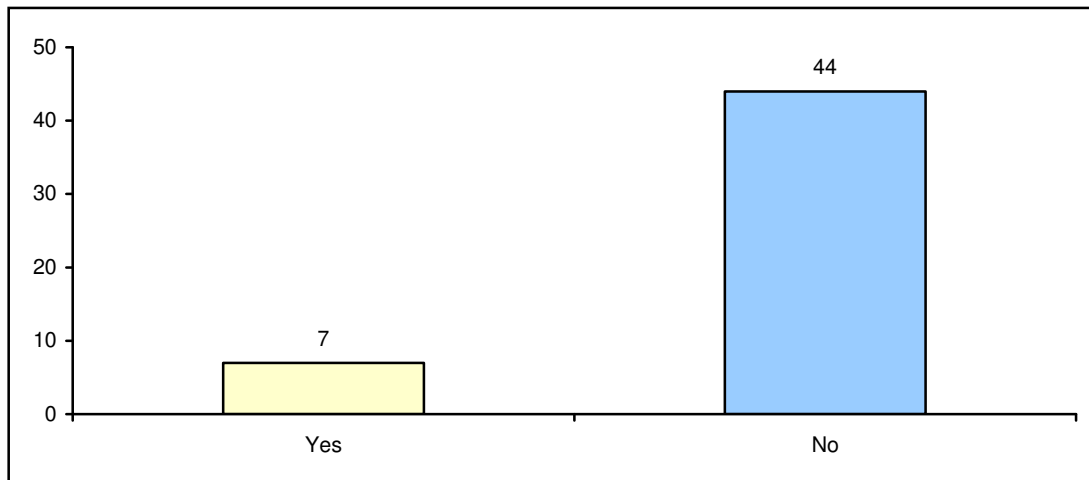


Q5a. Have you recruited (or tried to recruit) new construction industry workers in the past? (51)



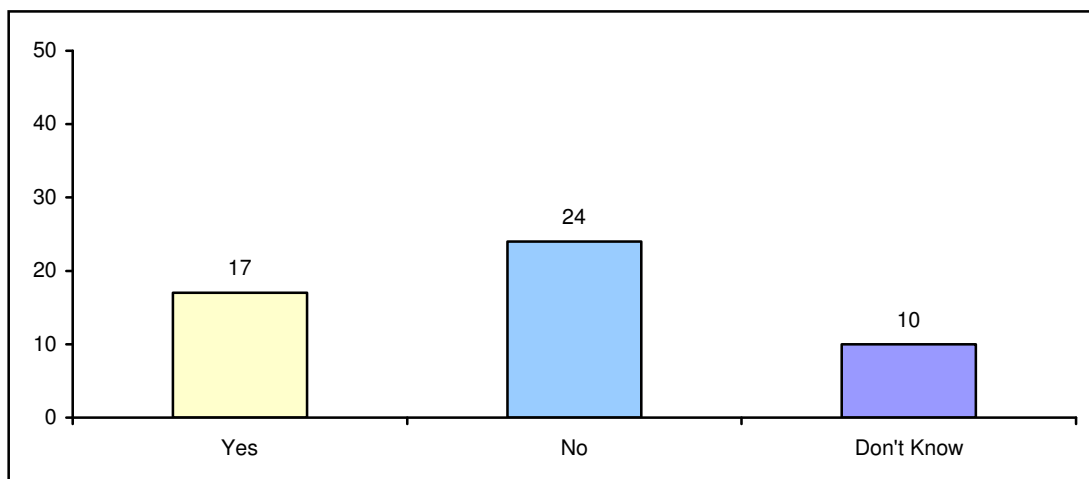
Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

Q5b. Are you currently recruiting (or trying to recruit) new construction industry workers? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

Q5c. Do you expect to recruit (or try to recruit) new construction industry workers in the future? (51)

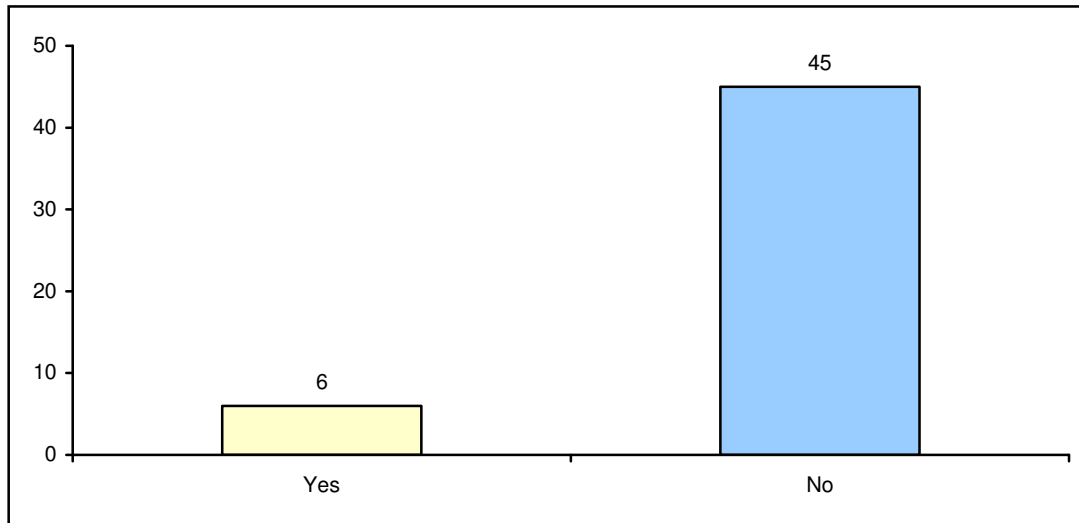


Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

The 3 charts presented above indicate that the majority of employers – 24 (or 47%) – are not currently trying to recruit new employees, although 17 (33%) do expect to recruit at some point in the future.

When the 24 employers who indicated that they did not expect to recruit in the future were asked why, the most commonly given answer (by just under half of those questioned) was that they preferred working on their own. This would seem to indicate that many tradespeople prefer to keep their status as sole traders. This could be due to enjoyment of lone working, or due to a reluctance to take on additional staff, and the responsibilities and bureaucracy that this entails.

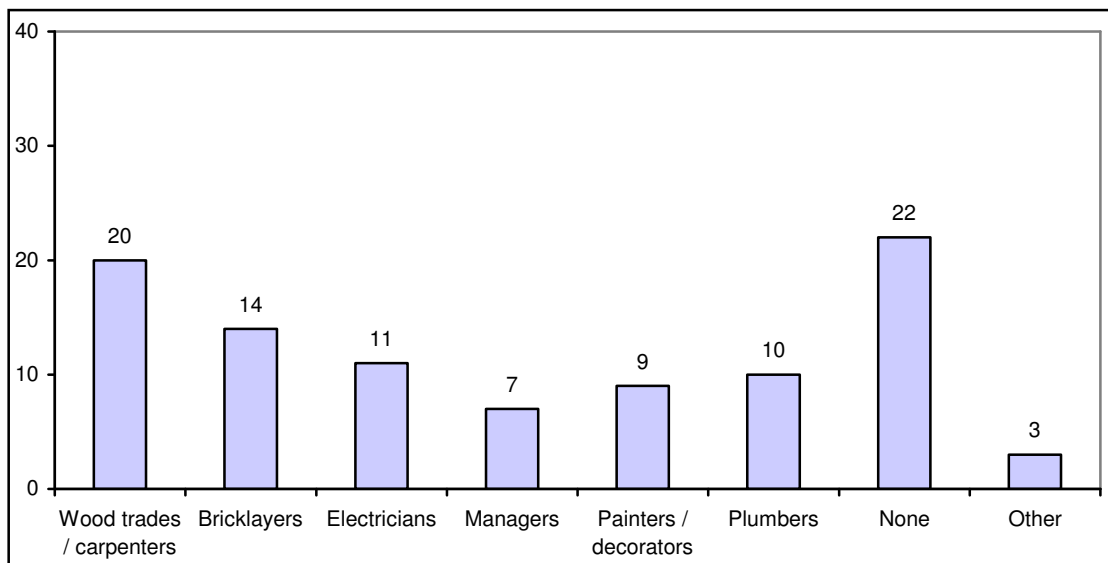
Q6. Do you currently have any apprentices, on either a formal or informal scheme? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

As can be seen from the above, only 6 companies (12%) currently have an apprentice / apprentices on their books.

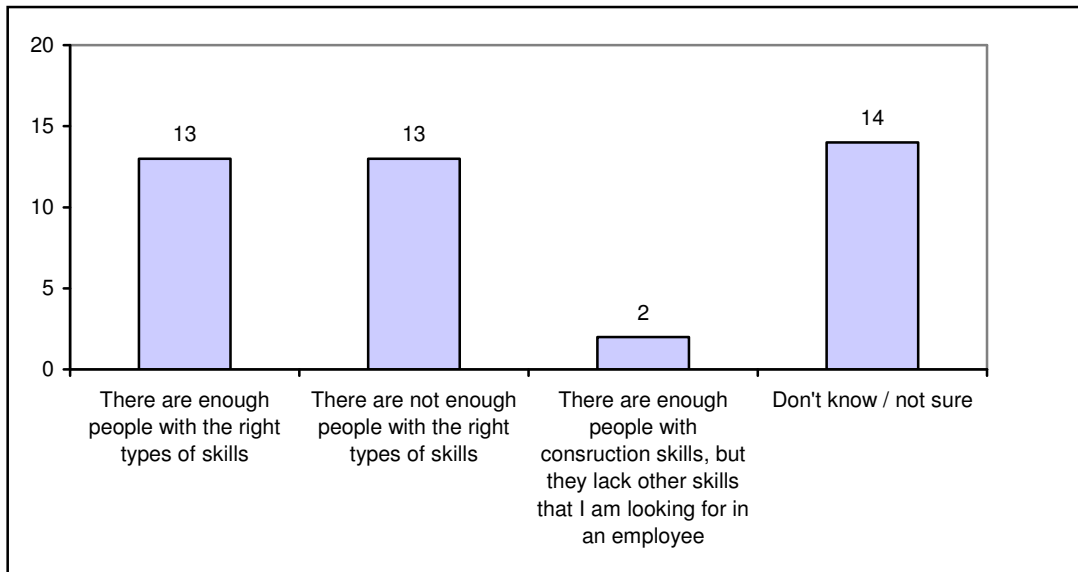
Q8. Which, if any, of the following trades would you like to develop through recruitment and training? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

As can be seen from the above, the majority of interviewees – 22 of those questioned, or 43% - were not looking to develop any specific trades through recruitment or training. Where interviewees indicated that they were interested in developing trades, carpentry (20 responses, 39%), bricklayers (14 responses, 27%), and electricians (11 responses, 22%) were the trades most often mentioned.

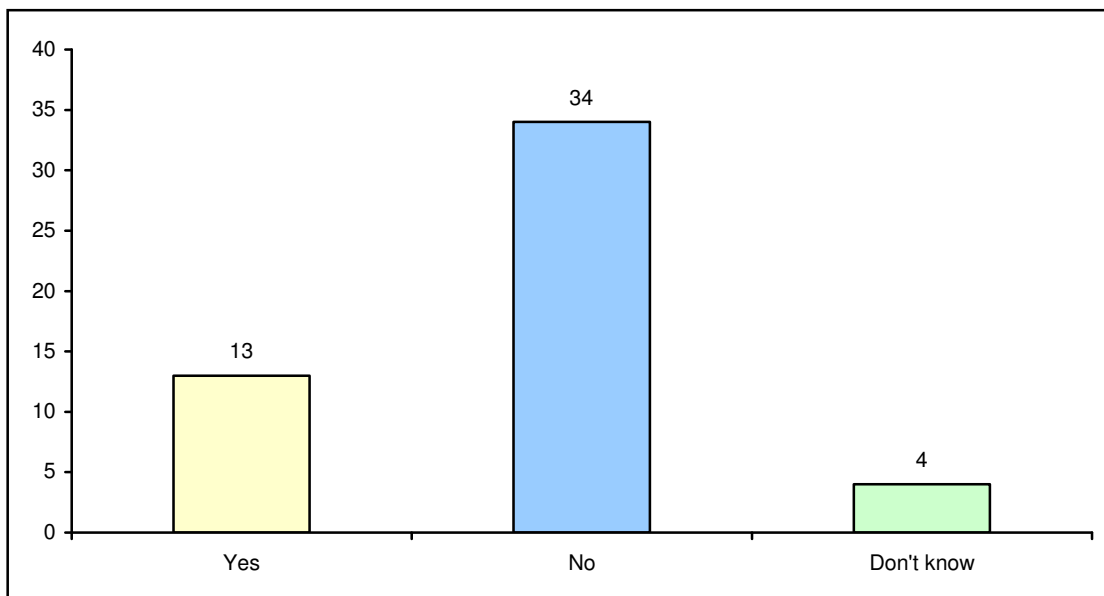
Q9a. What is your opinion of the level of construction industry skills and experience amongst the population of the Dyfi? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

As can be seen from the chart above, most interviewees (14 responses, or 29%) did not feel able to comment on the level of construction skills amongst the population of the Dyfi Valley. Where interviewees were happy to comment, answers are split down the middle and are therefore inconclusive, revealing that equal numbers of people thought that skills were (a) available or (b) not available (both of these answers scored 13 responses, or 25%). This question therefore does not give any clear results in terms of opinions of levels of skills within the construction industry.

Q10. Does your firm use any innovative forms of construction skills in addition to the more traditional trades and skills (this could include solar heating, energy saving, eco housing skills, etc)? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Interviews 2007

This question indicates that only 13 firms (25%) use innovative or sustainable forms of constructions skills, indicating that this sector remains a potential growth area for Bro Ddyfi.

Q16. What do you think are the barriers to taking on an apprentice? (Please note that interviewees were able to state more than one barrier)

From the answers that were given to this question, Wavehill was able to group the responses into themes. These were:

- **Health and Safety / red tape and paperwork x 19**

Example answers included "Health and Safety issues are the biggest barriers; rules should be changed to be more realistic" and "There's too much red tape involved with taking on an apprentice".

- **Cost x 11**

Example answers included "Being out of pocket" and "Having to pay out when work is slack."

- **Enthusiasm / Attitude / Willingness to Learn x 8**

Example answers included "Seems to be a lack of dedication to work and the willingness to learn" and "We have had one or two who haven't seemed to want to work."

- **Time x 4**

Example answers included "We have to watch them and check their work, and that's what costs us, as it means we have to take a man off the job to check what the apprentice is doing."

- **Various x 24**

A wide range of other answers, which did not fit neatly into themes, were also given, and included "For us, it's the risk of investing a lot of money in their specialist training, and then that person not staying with the company" and "For me it's my age, if I was younger I could do it."

Q17. What are the implications of taking on an apprentice? (Please note that interviewees were able to state more than one barrier)

Again, from the answers that were given to this question, Wavehill was able to group responses into themes. These were:

- **Health and Safety / red tape and paperwork x 16**
- **Cost x 6**
- **Enthusiasm / Attitude / Willingness to Learn x 6**
- **Time x 4**
- **Various x 27**

Answers in the 'various' theme included: "I'd be more tied down, and lose freedom", "You have to have patience to teach and advise" and "Having to answer to officials nosing around."

Q18. What are the advantages of a construction industry apprenticeship scheme?

Again, from the answers that were given to this question, Wavehill was able to group responses into themes. These were:

- **Gives young people a chance to learn a trade / strengthens the work force x 26**

Example answers included "Giving someone the chance to learn the trade" and "To build up the next generation so that they can live locally and gain employment locally."

- **Extra help for employer x 3**

One example answer included "Another pair of hands and gradually let the youngsters take over more responsibility and sit back a little more."

- **Various x 22**

Example answers included "ultimately very little in this day and age" and "Wouldn't have to do boring jobs."

Q19. What are the disadvantages of a construction industry apprenticeship scheme?

Again, from the answers that were given to this question, Wavehill was able to group responses into themes. These were:

- **Health and Safety / red tape and paperwork x 11**
- **Lack of practical training / too much theory x 6**

An example answer included "As apprenticeships are at the moment, they are all theory and no experience. How can they learn if they are not getting practical experience"

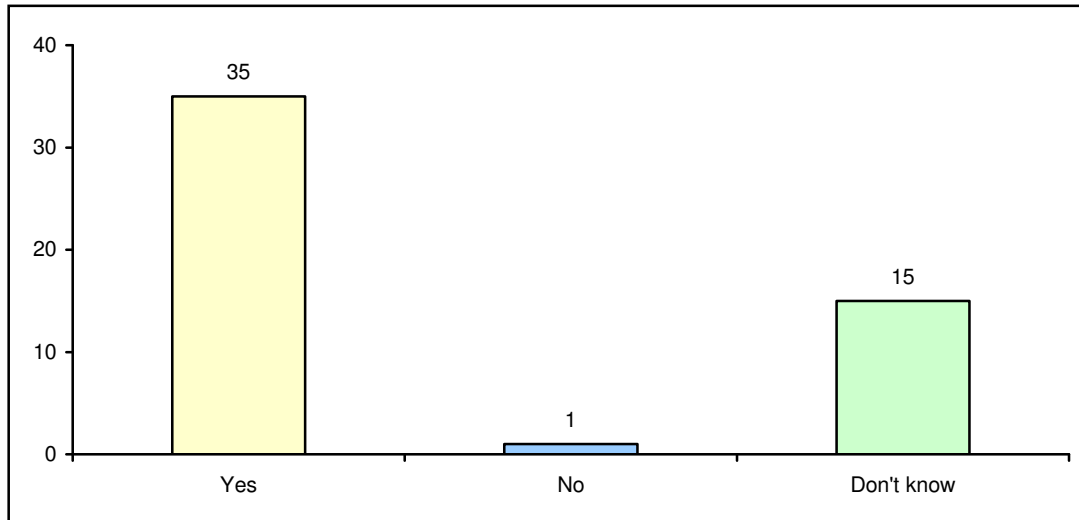
- **Cost x 5**
- **Loss of autonomy x 3**

An example answer included "I like working on my own."

- **Enthusiasm / Attitude / Willingness to Learn x 2**
- **Time x 2**
- **Various x 15**

Example answers included "If I want help anytime I don't have any problems", "If I have a big job on I sub contract" and "The lads that come through from CITB are just not bright enough any more. All the clever kids are encouraged to go off to university, and so the ones that aren't as clever are the ones who are left behind. And you can't have a lad who can't even read a tape measure on a building site."

Q21. Do you think a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a good idea for the Bro Ddyfi area? (51)

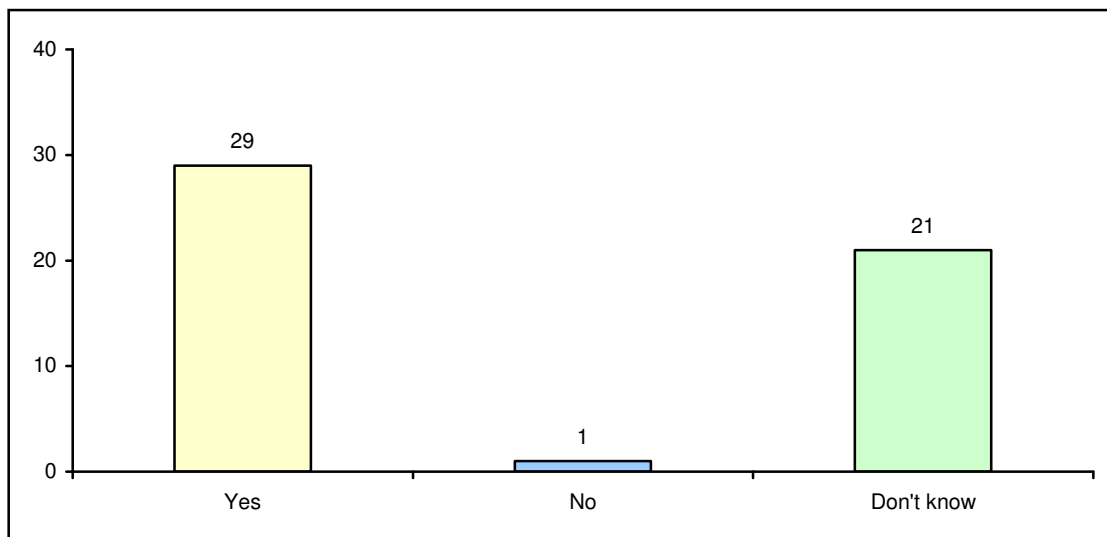


Wavehill Consulting Telephone Interviews 2007

As interviews were drawing to a close, participants were asked whether they thought a construction industry apprenticeship scheme was a good idea for the Dyfi Valley. As can be seen from the chart above, 35 respondents (69%) consider that such a scheme is a good idea.

However, it is essential to also bear in mind the answers to the following questions – Q22 and Q24.

Q22. Do you think a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area? (51)



Wavehill Consulting Telephone Interviews 2007

This chart shows that 29 respondents (57%) feel that a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area. This is 6 (or 12%) lower than the number who think an apprenticeship scheme is a good idea.

Q24. Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

When asked if they had any further comments to make about the potential for a construction industry apprenticeship scheme, the following were some of the answers given:

- "I use a lot of subcontractors when I have a lot of work on or when I need specific skills."
- "If and when I need extra help I sub contract to self employed people."
- "Most builders use sub-contractors those days when they have a lot of work on."
- "NVQ's are a waste of time and money, nothing the government has come up with can touch the old fashioned way. You can't become an electrician in 2 years, especially in these complex days."
- "The old fashioned scheme is the best. Go to college for 6 months then work for 3 1/2 years with a weekly day release for college. This is the best proven way."

7.3 Data Analysis Conclusions

- Wavehill was able to ensure a good cross-section of interviewees, with participants ranging from general builders through a wide range of specialist trades.
- The majority of interviewees (53%) had no employees, or employed only 1 to 5 people (31%).
- The key qualities that construction industry employers are looking for in their employees are: enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and a good attitude. Specific skills and experience were rated lower.
- The majority of employers (86%) are not currently trying to recruit new employees.
- Only 12% of interviewees (6 companies out of 51 questioned) currently have an apprentice / apprentices on their books.
- The majority of interviewees (43%) were not looking to develop any specific trades through recruitment or training. Where interviewees indicated that they were interested in developing trades, carpentry (39%), bricklayers (27%), and electricians (22%) were the trades most often mentioned.
- Most interviewees (29%) did not feel able to comment on the general level of construction skills amongst the population of the Dyfi Valley. Where interviewees were happy to comment, answers are split down the middle and are therefore inconclusive, revealing that equal numbers of people thought that skills were (a) available or (b) not available (both of these answers scored 25%).
- Only 25% of firms use innovative or sustainable forms of constructions skills, indicating that this sector remains a potential growth area for Bro Ddyfi.
- The barriers to and implications of taking on an apprentice were seem to be:
 - Health and Safety / red tape and paperwork
 - Cost
 - Enthusiasm / attitude / willingness to learn
 - Lack of practical training for apprentices whilst at college / too much theory
 - Time
 - Loss of employer autonomy / freedom

Of these answers, Health and Safety was the response most commonly given.

- 69% of respondents consider that such a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a good idea for the Bro Ddyfi area.
- 57% of respondents feel that a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area.

From the round up of results presented above, it can be seen that, whilst there may be general support for the theory of apprenticeship schemes, in practice, employers are reluctant to commit to taking on an apprentice. When work load demands increase, or additional specific skills are required, businesses seem to prefer to sub-contract as necessary, or to draw on their own informal support networks (e.g. family members).

In addition, interviewees also commented on the nature of current training provision for the industry, indicating that many felt that courses and apprenticeships in their current format are not delivering what employers want. For example, more than one employer spoke of apprentices coming on site who were lacking in basic skills, and were therefore unable to carry out simple tasks. Other employers spoke of a lack of practical experience that made apprentices a danger to have on site.

So, whilst 69% of tradespeople / employers say that they think an apprenticeship scheme is a good idea, once the issues are explored further, some significant problems are revealed.

In addition, Wavehill also asked all interviewees if we could pass their contact details on to the Communities First partnership, so that they could be contacted in future (it was explained that this contact could be to do with progressing the idea of an apprenticeship scheme, other research, or general publicity and awareness raising regarding the work of Communities First in the area). Only 53% of interviewees agreed to their contact details being passed on – a lower rate than would be hoped for if there was real enthusiasm for an apprenticeships scheme.

7.4 Employer Focus Group Results

Once the results from the employers' interviews were analysed and reviewed, Wavehill decided that it would be useful to hold a further focus group to discuss some of the issues and concerns that had been raised, and the Communities First economy and employment sub-group, which was steering the process on behalf of the full Partnership, was in agreement with this plan. This focus group was delivered in addition to the agreed methodology for this study.

It was felt that this additional focus group would enable employers to get together informally, to discuss their concerns about apprenticeships and employment generally, and to discuss actions that could potentially be taken to overcome these concerns or barriers. Wavehill therefore invited a number of employers to attend a focus group at the Wynnstay Hotel in Machynlleth town centre. This venue was chosen as it would be familiar to most local people, and would also help to engender an appropriately informal atmosphere. The focus group was scheduled for 6.30pm to 7.30pm on Tuesday 8 May 2007, and refreshments and a buffet were provided, so that participants could attend straight from work if they wished.

Of the employers / tradespeople who were invited, 15 agreed verbally to attend on the evening. All were sent a confirmation letter 5 days before the event, and were asked to inform Wavehill if they were not then able to attend for some reason. From these 15 positive responses received in advance of the event, only one participant actually attended on the evening. None of the other 14 potential attendees informed Wavehill that they would not be attending.

Wavehill was therefore unable to proceed with the focus group as planned. However, the one employer that did attend gave a useful contribution to the wider research, and made some interesting comments regarding barriers (e.g. Health and Safety, red tape and paperwork, cost, enthusiasm / attitude / willingness to learn, lack of practical training, too much theory at college, loss of autonomy of employer time, etc) to taking on an apprentice or to taking on employees generally. These included the fact that there is a skills shortage within the industry, which is compounded by a lack of understanding and lack of information regarding what exactly an apprenticeship scheme is.

In addition, the employer felt that schools are currently geared up to push for success in GCSEs and A Levels, followed by attendance at university, rather than promoting manual trades as a viable career option. Whilst this is a strategic issue, it would be possible to work at a local level with the school to promote construction and other manual trades as realistic options, even for more academic young people. This was felt to be particularly important in light of the advent of student loans and tuition fees, which can result in young people leaving university with a substantial debt: entry onto an apprenticeship scheme would remove this debt commitment for the young person.

Finally, the employer felt that it may also be useful to develop a model that would show the economic impact if just one local person was trained in a skilled manual trade, and stayed in the area. It was felt that this could be used as a promotional tool within schools (as well as in other settings) for recruiting young people to skilled manual and construction trades. Such a PR exercise, particularly with school staff, pupils, and parents, was seen to be crucial to the further development of the industry locally.

These concerns, as expressed by employers during the interview process, and as evidenced by the disappointing response to the focus group, have been used to inform the recommendations that are made at the end of this report.

8. Stakeholder Views

8.1 Introduction

As part of its primary research, Wavehill interviewed representatives from 11 stakeholder organisations. In this instance, stakeholders are organisations that, at times, work alongside or in partnership with Communities First Bro Ddyfi. These stakeholder organisations will therefore have a view on how services should be delivered, activities which should be progressed, issues that should be addressed, etc. Whilst there are often no formal partnership arrangements between different 'stakeholder' organisations, they certainly impact upon each other in some way at some level, and as such should be able to participate in the consultation process. Whilst some stakeholders may be considered to be core to the work of the Partnership, others may be considered to be more peripheral.

During this consultation process, views were sought from stakeholders in the DELLS and DEIN departments of the Assembly Government, the voluntary sector, the community sector, public / private partnerships, industry bodies, training and education organisations, etc.

In this section of the report, Wavehill presents some of the key findings from its interviews with stakeholders. Only the key questions are included here; for a full version of the data analysis, with responses to all questions asked, please refer to the annexe to this report.

8.2 Data Analysis Results

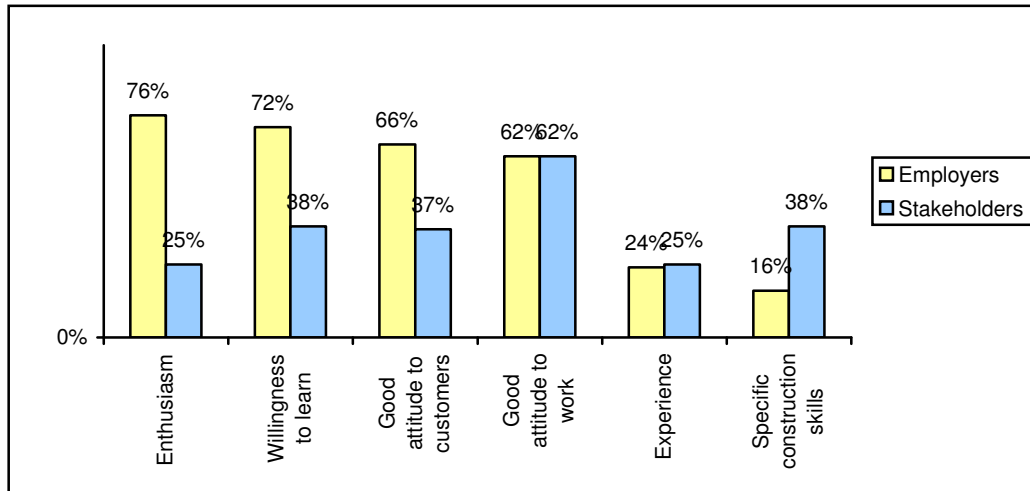
Please note that the question number (e.g. Q3) refers to the number of the question in the original full-length questionnaire, as contained within the annexe to this report.

Q3. What do you think construction industry employers are looking for in a potential employee? Please score on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 would be very important and 1 would be least important

From the answers given by interviewees, it can be seen that stakeholders believe that the key qualities that employers are looking for in employees are enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and a good attitude. Specific skills and experience were rated considerably lower. Please see the summary chart below for a direct comparison of scores.

Quality	Score 5 (i.e. very important)
Enthusiasm	25%
Willingness to learn	38%
Good attitude to customers	37%
Good attitude to work and employer	62%
Specific construction skills	38%
Experience	25%

It is interesting to compare these views to the views of employers themselves. Please see the summary chart below for a comparison of scores.



As can clearly be seen, employers rate enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and a good attitude to customers much more highly than stakeholders. Conversely, stakeholders rate specific construction skills more highly than employers do. Whilst the number of stakeholder interviews was relatively small (only 8 of the 11 interviewees felt able to give an answer to this question) these responses do show that there is potentially some difference of opinion between stakeholders and employers as to what the key attributes of an employee are.

Q6. What possibilities for a construction industry apprenticeship scheme do you think exist in the Bro Ddyfi area?

Please note that the full range of answers to this question is included within the annexe to this report. However, some examples of the answers given to this question included:

- "It may be possible to develop a 'marriage bureau' type of service in order to link employers with young people."
- "I think that the fact that the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) is based in the area lends itself to other companies in the area having a spin off with eco-issues and green building. I also think that as housing will shortly have to have an energy rating there may be opportunities in that area."
- "It may be possible to provide employers with support of other kinds for example advice and guidance."
- "Skills levels are pretty low in the area. There are plenty of Level 1 skills, which is sufficient for initial labouring, but progression into the higher levels is lacking. This is because travel and access is an issue in rural areas, and because the colleges don't offer these higher levels. I think if we focussed on green and sustainability issues, there could be a real opportunity, and CAT could definitely be tied in more to the school and to the community. We're going to be moving forward with the Pathfinder recommendations, and bringing all learning in the Machynlleth area together on one site, along with support services such as the Police, health, and community groups."

The comments received in response to this question all indicated broad support from stakeholders for an apprenticeship scheme. Of particular interest are the ideas to link into sustainable building methods, and the training and education potential for the area that will arise from the Pathfinder developments.

Q8. Do you think a construction industry apprenticeship scheme can help to address the loss of jobs resulting from recent closures and relocations affecting Bro Ddyfi?

Some of the answers given to this question included:

- "Yes but probably only in a small way. It may create jobs but it is not going to be big numbers."
- "I think it also needs to link back to employer need and perhaps not just in the Bro Ddyfi area but surrounding areas as well."
- "Yes I'm sure it can help a little bit. But employers need to look outside of the area for bigger contracts and opportunities, and only then is it likely to have a big impact on jobs."
- "Yes, the regional statement of needs for this area identified heritage and other construction skills as a high priority. We need to be able to train people so that they can feed into these jobs. There is going to be a lot of development in the area, with the Assembly's move to Aberystwyth, and there will be building opportunities developing from this."

One of the specific areas of interest within the research brief for this report was whether an apprenticeship scheme could help to address the loss of jobs that had occurred in the area recently. As can be seen from the comments above, stakeholders do feel that such a scheme could contribute to employment levels, although perhaps only in small numbers.

Q9. Do you think your organisation would get involved in such a scheme?

- "Yes." x 4
- "Only through the Communities First structure; not directly."
- "I can't see any real links except for us to offer our support as part of the general regeneration programme."
- "That would depend on how it was set up - if it was set up as an ILM we could."
- "It's something that we would not say no to working with. We do teach some more specific skill courses here, maybe that could be something we could look at adapting"
- "Yes, but I think we would be involved through DELLS rather than DEIN."

Answers to this question indicate that the majority of stakeholder organisations would be willing to become involved in an apprenticeship scheme for the area, if such a scheme was developed. Stakeholders then went on to say that they would contribute in areas such as knowledge of business support, raising awareness about the scheme, assisting with business planning for employers and training organisations, advice regarding sustainable buildings and renewable energy, experience of working with young people, etc. This indicates that there is expertise available to the Communities First Partnership, should an apprenticeship scheme go ahead.

Q12. From your perspective, what do you think are the advantages of a potential construction industry apprenticeship scheme?

Answers to this question included:

- "Helping young people into work."
- "The opportunity for a higher value workforce in the area. It may also spark self - employment in the individuals."
- "It could elevate the level of skills in the workforce."
- "The main driver would be giving jobs/apprenticeships to young people and at the same time it would be skilling them up with something they are going to have for life."
- "If it was a live scheme teaching real skills, it would up skill the local labour market"
- "If an apprenticeship can provide a qualification and a good range of experience, then it's worth doing"

These responses indicate that stakeholders and employers see broadly similar benefits potentially arising from an apprenticeship scheme.

Q13. From your perspective, what do you think are the disadvantages to a potential construction industry apprenticeship scheme?

Answers to this question included:

- "Employers feeling that it is going to be too much trouble to go to for the return to them in terms of extra administration, etc."
- "I think that the minimum wage has had a big impact on apprenticeship schemes, as it doesn't allow for young people to go through a 5 year training process like they used to."
- "I think the main problem is that employers get apprentices to fill cement mixers all day. They don't get a breadth of training. Also, lots of the businesses round here are small family businesses, who don't want to take on people they don't know – networks are very tight."
- "I think people don't really know what Communities First does, so there is potential for confusion."
- "I don't think a scheme can just act as a matchmaking agency, and leave it at that. I think we need to follow through and monitor progression, so that we can see how effective the scheme is."

For a full record of all responses, please refer to the annexe to this report. In the meantime, the answers listed above indicate that stakeholders do have concerns regarding a potential apprenticeship scheme. Some of these problems – such as awareness of Communities First – can be tackled locally, whilst others – such as the impact of the minimum wage – are more strategic in nature.

Q14. Do you think a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a good idea for the Bro Ddyfi area?

In principle, all of the stakeholders interviewed felt that an apprenticeship scheme was a good idea for the Bro Ddyfi area. However, as indicated within the previous question, there were some reservations and concerns. For example:

- "In principle yes, and in the right circumstances where the length of the training is right and the training delivered is based on employers' needs, not dictated by what providers are already delivering."

Q15. Do you think a construction industry apprenticeship scheme is a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area?

In principle, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed felt that an apprenticeship scheme was a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area. However, there were reservations and concerns. For example:

- "I'm not sure, I think we will have to be led on this by the trade and training companies as they will know more than I do."
- "It depends upon three elements i. Employer need ii. The size of the project e.g. number of young people targeted and iii. The capital implications, how much is it going to cost and who is going to pay for it."
- "Yes, it could in context. But Bro Ddyfi need realistic expectations of its impact on the area. Think small and then grow accordingly."

- "I think it would be difficult to run."
- "Yes. But we would need to be really sure about the statistics – is there a demand for this? It needs to be sustainable in the long term."
- "Yes, as long as it links to the Pathfinder work. If it doesn't link to Pathfinder, then Communities First on its own would probably lack the clout to take this forward."

8.3 Data Analysis Conclusions

As can be seen from the responses above, and in the previous section, employers rate enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and a good attitude to customers much more highly than stakeholders. Conversely, stakeholders rate specific construction skills more highly than employers do. Whilst the number of stakeholder interviews was relatively small (only 8 of the 11 interviewees felt able to give an answer to this question) these responses do show that there is potentially some difference of opinion between stakeholders and employers as to what the key attributes of an employee are.

Comments from stakeholders all indicate broad support for an apprenticeship scheme. Of particular interest are the ideas to link into sustainable building methods, which links to findings stated previously in the report: i.e. that the sustainable building sector still offers potential for expansion in the area. Further, a number of stakeholders also see the need to respond to demonstrated employer need. However, as we have seen from the previous section of the report, employer interest – though present to some extent – cannot be guaranteed to translate into action. In practice, it seems that employers are reluctant to commit to taking on an apprentice. When work load demands increase, or additional specific skills are required, businesses seem to prefer to sub-contract as necessary, or to draw on their own informal support networks (e.g. family members).

In addition, stakeholders seem to be aware of other issues that may impact negatively on Bro Ddyfi's ability to establish a successful apprenticeship scheme. For example, stakeholders are concerned about general levels of awareness of the Communities First programme, whilst also fearing that the minimum wage has impacted negatively on the viability of apprenticeship schemes in general. Further, stakeholders were also wary of the potential for employers to misuse apprenticeship schemes, by not providing an appropriate breadth of experience or training for their apprentices.

Further, one of the specific areas of interest within the research brief for this report was whether an apprenticeship scheme could help to address the loss of jobs that had occurred in the area recently. As can be seen from the comments above, stakeholders do feel that such a scheme could contribute to employment levels, although perhaps only in small numbers. In addition, a number of stakeholders further recognised the potential benefits in training and education in the area, which will arise from the Pathfinder developments. Whilst perhaps not developing a large number of new job opportunities directly, the potential for knock-on impacts from increased levels of training in the area could be considerable (although, as yet, it is not possible to speculate on the expected impacts, as the Pathfinder plans are not yet firmly established).

In principle, then, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed felt that an apprenticeship scheme was a realistic idea for the Bro Ddyfi area. However, there were reservations and concerns about the practicality and viability of such a scheme.

9. Young People's Focus Group Results

9.1 Introduction

As part of its research, Wavehill was able to undertake a focus group with young people from Ysgol Bro Ddyfi. Wavehill consulted with 10 pupils in Year 10 and 11 (i.e. those of GCSE age). Both girls and boys were asked to attend, but in the event, only boys took part in the focus group, as no girls expressed an interest. Wavehill asked to speak with a mix of pupils – i.e. those who were already interested in a career in the construction industry, and those who were as yet undecided on their career options.

The focus group took place at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi, Machynlleth, on Wednesday 9 May 2007, and was facilitated by one of Wavehill's bilingual Senior Consultants. Wavehill would like to thank staff and pupils at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi for enabling us to carry out this element of the consultation.

9.2 Results of the Focus Group Discussion

From the issues discussed, Wavehill found that the majority of pupils in the group were interested in pursuing careers in the construction industry after finishing school. Areas of interest cited included: carpentry, general building, bricklaying, electronics and electrical engineering. One member of the group wanted to become a quantity surveyor, but was planning to do this after serving some years in the building trade.

Two members of the group intended working in a particular sector outside the area. One commented:

- *"I want to do electrical engineering and work for Airbus and I took the exam last week. It's a full-year in college in Flintshire then a year in their Broughton factory with one day a week in college."*

Two others had enrolled on apprenticeships at Coleg Powys; one wanted to be a builder and the other a carpenter:

- *"You do a full year in college and then find a builder to take you on – I've found that already. Then you're on day release from college and the firm gives you experience"*

When asked why they were interested in a career in the construction industry, most of the group knew people in the industry, and some had secured their apprenticeships through family and social connections. Comments included:

- *'My father's a builder and so I'll probably work for him.'*
- *'My brother's a builder and I'll be with him in the second year of my apprenticeship. I've worked with him over the summer, labouring and helping out when he's got a big job on.'*
- *'My uncle works for Airbus and that's why I want to work there. He's given me a lot of advice and help.'*

Attendees were also asked to consider what type of attributes and skills employers were generally looking for in an employee. Responses included:

- Enthusiasm
- A basic knowledge of construction
- Technical knowledge
- The ability to drive
- Good exam results
- Basic numeracy and literacy

At a higher level (such as foreman, Quantity Surveyor, architect), pupils also felt that the following were important:

- Communication skills
- People management skills

When asked to consider the level of opportunities in the construction industry that were open to young people in the Dyfi Valley area, the group appeared to be slightly divided in its opinion. Whilst they believed that opportunities in the area were limited, some were vocal about not seeing this as an insurmountable barrier. Comments included:

- *'There's not much around here, no, but you have to travel with construction. Not all the work is on your doorstep. People get contracts in Walsall, Birmingham, as well as locally.'*
- *'Round here it's all barn conversions and timber-framed house.'*

A barrier to entry-level employment was cited by one member of the group and met with agreement:

- *'The thing is electricians and plumbers won't take you on here because they're afraid of competition. They train you up, you qualify, then you go self-employed and compete against them for work. There's not enough work in the area for everybody.'*

When asked where they would prefer to study construction skills training, there was a mixed response from the group. Most of the members of the group who were shortly to be starting their training at Coleg Powys in Newtown were not put off by the travelling, and none of the others had seen travelling to Newtown daily as a barrier that prevented them considering this as an option. Comments included:

- *'The bus to Newtown is free, and it's only an hour.'*
- *'It gets you out of the town, to a new place to meet new people. I don't have a problem with it.'*
- *'Also, you have to explore a bit and find new opportunities outside the area. You can't have everything on your doorstep.'*

However, when the possibility of an apprenticeship scheme based in Bro Ddyfi was put forward, the group unanimously backed the idea, saying it could be good for the area:

- *'It would be good if there was a college in Mach. It would be good for the area, and bring people in from outside to study, help companies find people, maybe bring more jobs, I don't know.'*

When asked which language would you prefer to study in, the first-language Welsh-speakers present (over half of the group) all held the opinion that they would like bilingual tuition, as opposed to simply Welsh-medium provision. Comments included:

- *'We've been learning through Welsh since we were in nursery, so I would like to continue in Welsh, but I also want to know the English names for things like tools, wood joints, techniques. A mixture would be really good.'*
- *'Yeah I want to carry on in Welsh too, definitely, but I don't want to be on a building site outside Wales not knowing the name of something! I want to know the English terminology as well.'*

Further, when asked if they thought Ysgol Bro Ddyfi should be able to offer courses on construction skills, the majority of those present supported the idea and felt that it may help them to get jobs locally. Comments included:

- *'The school knows us and it would be good to stay local.'*
- *'And our lessons here are in both Welsh and English.'*
- *'It could help bring jobs in I suppose, and bring people in to study here.'*

Most of the pupils felt that a formal apprenticeship would certainly help them get jobs, but those who wanted to follow this route had already secured training and informally secured placements with local companies. Comments included:

- *'The employer I'll probably be with works locally, so the travelling to Newtown is the only difference for me, but as I say, the bus is free and it's not that far.'*
- *'Same for me, and I'm not put off by that.'*

One respondent made the point that it was at the higher end of the opportunity spectrum that forced people to travel out of the area:

- *'If you want to be an architect, a Quantity Surveyor or a site engineer, you have to travel to University. Liverpool, Cardiff, or somewhere.'*

Finally, when the possibility of an apprenticeship scheme based in Bro Ddyfi was put forward, the group unanimously backed the idea, saying it could be good for the area:

'It would be good for the area, and bring people in from outside to study, help companies find people, maybe bring more jobs, I don't know.'

9.3 Conclusions

As can be seen from the above responses, there are a number of pupils at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi who are interested in a career in the construction industry. There was also support for the concept of a locally based apprenticeship scheme.

However, it is also interesting to note that pupils with an interest in construction had already begun to make their own plans for accessing the industry. These generally involved advice and support from family members already in the industry, or work placements with the companies of family members or family friends. This reflects the findings of the employers' survey, which indicated that construction industry companies rely to a significant extent on informal family and friend networks to recruit employees and apprentices, and to cover busy periods (as well as employing sub-contractors as required).

10. The Future

The research underpinning this report indicates that there is some support for apprentices / an apprenticeship scheme in the Bro Ddyfi area, but this support is not unanimous, and certainly not without a range of caveats. Currently, 86% of employers in the construction industry in the area are not trying to recruit new employees, and only 6 companies out of the 51 interviewed currently have an apprentice on their books.

The research with employers indicates that construction companies in the area often rely on sub-contracting and informal networks to meet changing workload demands. Further, when apprentices are taken on, they are often taken as a result of contacts with informal networks of families and friends, rather than by contacting the CITB. This raises the issue of whether an apprenticeship scheme in the traditional sense is particularly suited to the nature of the area.

In addition, the report has outlined the perception amongst employers that the more academically able young people are encouraged to apply to university, rather than learning a (skilled) manual trade through an apprenticeship scheme or other route into the industry. This was seen as a significant barrier to attracting young people to the industry, and many employers felt that there was an urgent need to promote the industry as a viable job option for young people. The question that needs to be addressed in this instance is whether this is a job for Communities First Bro Ddyfi, or a job for central government.

If any ideas surrounding an apprenticeship scheme are to be taken forward in the area, then they must be developed slowly and progressively. A scheme of any sort would need to establish a good reputation amongst a small number of local employers, which – through existing close social and work networks – could then lead to word of mouth recommendation, and further growth for the scheme. However, the marked lack of interest in the focus group that was held to discuss possibilities indicates that even starting a small-scale scheme could be problematic.

This clearly indicates an issue regarding the supply and demand curve; i.e. is there enough demand from the construction industry locally to support more trained people. If construction projects are, as one interviewee put it, mainly renovations, then it is possible that this type of market will only support small sole traders and family businesses. In this scenario, the concept of a construction industry apprenticeship may not suit the local employment market, due to a lack of complexity and suitably sized contracts within that market. So, whilst there appears to be an interest in the scheme from the supply perspective (i.e. the stakeholder organisations) the demand side (i.e. employers) seems to have a different opinion. It is only when there is complementarity between demand and supply that such a scheme could be successful.

Finally, if any steps are taken in the area, then they **must** link in to the recommendations contained within the Pathfinder work, especially those contained within Miller Research's work, relating to the construction industry. A number of these recommendations concern the very early steps of any scheme development – such as addressing negative perceptions of the industry – and as such are particularly relevant to Communities First Bro Ddyfi, and any decisions it may take. Please note that these recommendations are included in Section 3 of this report.

Bearing in mind these issues, Wavehill has made a number of recommendations for further action. These are listed within the following section of the report.

11. Recommendations

Issue: There is general uncertainty amongst stakeholders as to how to progress the idea of an apprenticeship scheme for the Bro Ddyfi area, in whichever form it may take (if any). The lack of a clear consensus from local employers regarding this issue, as evidenced within this report, also means that a 'steer' regarding future direction is not currently forthcoming from the construction industry itself.

Evidence: Interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That representatives of the Economy and Employment Subgroup of the Communities First Partnership visit a number of other such schemes (as described within this report) to see if there are any lessons that can be learned from experience in other areas. Armed with the information gathered during Wavehill's research, such visits may help the Partnership to establish a clearer way forward. It seems from the research that local businesses are possibly too small (i.e. sole trader or family based) to support such a scheme and, unless both sides can be seen to be working in a mutually beneficial way, then there is too much risk in this project. This scheme may work very well in areas that have larger construction businesses and bigger contracts, but the question remains as to whether the Bro Ddyfi economy could support this project. Visits to other projects may help to clarify the elements of a successful scheme, and indicate what next steps could potentially be taken in Bro Ddyfi.

Issue: Construction industry employers within the Bro Ddyfi area are not universally enthusiastic about the potential development of an apprenticeship scheme. There appears to be a lack of awareness generally of apprenticeship schemes, as well as a number of serious concerns voiced by employers regarding the legal, safety, and practical issues connected to taking on an apprentice.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area.

Recommendation: Further work with employers is needed, in order to increase understanding / the profile of apprenticeships, and to promote the potential benefits of apprenticeship schemes. Further, it may be possible for Communities First Bro Ddyfi to: bring in specialists to give advice / assistance on recruiting an apprentice; bring in specialists to give advice / assistance on health and safety issues; bring in specialists to provide training in dealing with paperwork; deliver information evenings to bring together employers, CITB and colleges in order to enable an exchange of views regarding problems and concerns with current apprenticeship schemes, etc. Such development work could include the further exploration of the cost to an employer of taking on an apprentice, such as a review of direct wage costs, training costs, financial support from industry bodies etc, so that employers are very clear about the costs of taking on an apprentice, and therefore feel more able to make a decision based on facts. In this way, there is potential for Communities First Bro Ddyfi to act as a central hub or the central point of a network, facilitating discussion, organising training, building communication channels, and improving communication between organisations.

Issue: There is a perception amongst some employers and stakeholders that the construction industry (or other forms of skilled manual labour) is regarded in a less favourable light, when compared to the option of achieving good GCSE and A Level results, and attending university. However, the reality is that the construction industry is, and is set to remain, a viable career option for young people, both in the Bro Ddyfi area and UK-wide, as previous research carried out by a number of organisations (and cited within this report) indicates that there is a growing skills shortage in the industry.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi. Wavehill's desk-based review of existing research, prior to commencement of primary research for this report.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners explores its options for working with Ysgol Bro Ddyfi to promote manual, semi skilled, and skilled trades as a viable career option. However, this option will only be advisable if employers in the construction industry locally are willing to become more engaged in the process. If they are not engaged, young people who wish to enter the industry may well have to leave the area to access employment opportunities, which would be counter to the purpose of the scheme.

Issue: The possibility of developing construction courses at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi has been raised by a number of stakeholders. The perception is that this would allow local young people to more clearly understand the benefits of a career in the industry. This could potentially lead to the development of work trials / work experience opportunities, which could help to relieve employers of some of their worries regarding being 'stuck' with an unsuitable apprentice (although there would be a number of significant health and safety issues to be overcome with such a scheme).

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners explores its options for working with Ysgol Bro Ddyfi to develop construction courses. However, this option will only be advisable if employers in the construction industry locally are willing to become more engaged in the process. In addition, any developments in terms of construction courses would need to be in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's Pathfinder recommendations.

Issue: When asked what they felt were the most important qualities in an employee, employers were most interested in: enthusiasm, willingness to learn, a good attitude to customers, and a good attitude to work and the employer. These are fairly basic workplace skills and attributes, rather than specific building industry knowledge or experience.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with the construction industry in the area, and with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: It may be possible for Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners to develop training courses / awareness raising sessions that explore the importance of basic workplace attributes and behaviours. These seminars could be delivered to young people in order to better prepare them for work. Such training sessions need not be confined to the construction industry, as Wavehill's previous evaluation experience indicates that attitude / willingness to learn etc are seen by employers as desirable attributes in an employee across all sectors. The Communities First Partnership in the Pen Llŷn area has been involved in similar direct delivery, and could potentially offer advice for the Partnership in the Bro Ddyfi area.

Issue: It may be useful to undertake further research into a shared apprenticeship scheme for the area, potentially bringing in other sectors such as engineering, agriculture etc. Widening the scope of a potential apprenticeship scheme in this way may help to garner more local interest. Wavehill had hoped to discuss this possibility with a group of construction employers in Bro Ddyfi, but was prevented from doing so by the poor response to the invitation to a focus group.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi.

Recommendation: That Communities First Bro Ddyfi carefully considers whether further research would be of use at this stage, or whether this should be held off until a later date.

Issue: A great deal of strategically-led research, in terms of consolidation and improvement of training delivery, has already been developed within the Bro Ddyfi area by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Evidence: Wavehill's interviews with stakeholders connected to Communities First Bro Ddyfi. Wavehill's desk-based review of existing research developments, prior to commencement of primary research for this report.

Recommendation: That any and all actions taken by Communities First Bro Ddyfi and its partners must link in to the recommendations contained within the Pathfinder work, especially those contained within Miller Research's report relating to the construction industry. Whilst there does not seem to be an overwhelming demand from employers within the Bro Ddyfi area for a construction industry apprenticeship scheme concentrated specifically on the Bro Ddyfi area, this does not mean that there is not still an option to develop the idea over a wider area (i.e. mid Wales) as described within the Miller Report. The handful of Bro Ddyfi employers who seemed genuinely interested in the idea of such a scheme, along with the young people who were also interested, could link into such a wider based scheme, and therefore not lose out due to the lack of a Bro Ddyfi specific scheme. Therefore, Wavehill feels that Communities First Bro Ddyfi should continue to maintain strong links with the Pathfinder developments, in order to ensure that any scheme taken forward can be accessed by local employers and young people.