



Evaluation of UK Futures Programme

Offsite Management School
case study report

Briefing Paper
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UK Futures Programme Evaluation: Offsite Management School case study report

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1 Purpose

This report presents the findings of a case-study that has been conducted on the Offsite Management School, a new training programme aiming to improve the efficiency and capability of firms in the offsite construction sector. The School was provided with £180,000 of support by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills through its innovative funding and research approach, the UK Futures Programme.

The UK Futures Programme supports original project ideas through targeted small scale co-investment in order to draw out lessons about what works in addressing specific business issues. The main points of learning from this project are outlined below, and then explained in more detail as the report progresses.

2 Background

2.1 The UK Futures Programme

The UK Futures Programme (UKFP) aims to provide a new way of tackling development issues in the UK workforce by encouraging and learning from innovative solutions. Through 5 “Productivity Challenges” focused on emerging or persistent market and system failures in specific areas and sectors, it aims to support collaboration from employers and wider social partners on innovative ways of addressing their skills and development issues. From this, the aim is to identify possible routes around these barriers to UK competitiveness, and to build up a body of knowledge about “what works” in addressing market failures in workforce development for adoption in policy development and wider business practice.

2.2 UK Futures Programme Evaluation of the Offsite Management School

To build this knowledge, the UKFP is being evaluated in real time, to draw out rich lessons from the projects funded, create understanding of the conditions and practices that make for effective solutions, allow continuous improvement of the investment approach, and communicate the learning from the programme to inform policy and practice.

The first Productivity Challenge of the UK Futures Programme targeted six projects in offsite construction, one of which was the Offsite Management School. Offsite construction is a growing area of construction, in which buildings are put together from pre-fabricated units, made away from the construction site and then delivered there to be assembled in-situ. It has the potential to have a major impact on the productivity and efficiency of the sector. However, offsite only represents a small proportion of total construction in the UK – demand is not yet strong, and the complex set of skills needed to manage, co-ordinate, and market offsite construction projects still need development. The challenge was therefore launched to explore ways of improving skills, collaboration and demand in the offsite construction industry. By co-investing in innovative and risky projects that confront this issue, the intent is to build understanding about what works and what doesn't, and use this to inform the actions of business and government.

UKCES has goals for learning from the Challenge more generally, which line up with the learning taken from this project. The main research questions for this case study concern: the impact of the project on offsite construction skills in the targeted companies, the means of engaging end-users in the design of training, the most effective ways to engage and influence employers and end-users, and the effects and effectiveness of the teaching methods chosen. Collaboration is a general area of interest for the Futures Programme, and emerges as a strong theme for this case study.

2.3 Project Scope

The Offsite Management School was a UK Futures Programme-funded project, aiming to drive up skill levels in the offsite construction supply chain through online and face-to-face training and industry engagement. It was headed by a partnership of industry representatives, consisting of:

- Five major construction companies: Skanska, Costain, Carillion, Laing O'Rourke and Siemens, "primes" whose supply chains were the main targets of the School.
- Action Sustainability: a training and consultancy company, previously responsible for running a similar project in the construction industry, the Supply Chain Sustainability School. Action Sustainability project-managed the partnership and organised the development of the training.
- "Knowledge partners": consultancies including Exellin and Total Flow, which advised on the development of the materials and helped deliver training.
- Industry bodies: BRE, The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), and Build Offsite, which provided support in developing and promoting the School.

On top of UKCES funding, the project received £212,464 in in-kind funding from the partners, alongside significant cash investment, with the total budget during the funding period exceeding £400,000. From inception in September 2014, 12 online modules were developed, 20 face-to-face training workshops were delivered, and six supplier days, at which the primes promoted the School to select companies in their supply chain, were held.

2.4 Methodology

This case study is based around interviews conducted with 4 partners and 2 end-users of the School, and a reading of UK Futures Programme documentation on the project. The partners interviewed were:

- The Head of Supply Chain for Water and Factory Thinking at Costain

- The Head of Innovation at Skanska UK
- The Head of Building Information Modelling (BIM) for Carillion
- The Director at Action Sustainability responsible for the School.

The case study will proceed to examine the activities and methods of the project in order to inform against the research questions outlined above in 2.2. In particular, it will cover successively:

- How collaboration was established and ensured, and what the motivating factors were for companies to collaborate
- How effective the School's training methods, and balance of online versus offline content, were in supporting learning and impact
- The impact and sustainability of the project.

3 Main Findings

The collaboration between the partners was built on a shared perception of an existing industry problem. Targets emerging from the government's Construction 2025 plan require transformative change in the construction industry. Partners agreed that Offsite Construction was the means to do this, and extensive networking by Skanska and Action Sustainability secured commitment to this initiative.

Collaboration was supported by a clear agenda and goals and strong project management. In addition, partners recognised that the goals of the School were best achieved by the industry working together.

The involvement of a number of significant primes in a major initiative drew the industry in. Suppliers with close relationships to primes or a prior interest in industry issues were willing to assist in the development of the project.

The primarily online training of the School had clear impacts, but real changes in practice came from engaging end-users of the School in the message behind the project, rather than just delivering training.

The clear commitment of the primes to the project, co-ordinated communications, and the involvement of a wide range of industry players helped ensure engagement from the supply chain.

Overall, the project has a robust strategy to sustain and grow its operations. It continues to draw strong support from primes across the industry. Its ongoing challenge is to secure as full a commitment to improvement as possible from the suppliers engaged in training.

4 Origins and Governance

The School emerged from the Supply Chain Sustainability School, a similar partnership run by Action Sustainability and targeted at the construction sector. The Government's Construction 2025 agenda has placed demands on the industry to reduce carbon emissions and costs by 50% and delivery time by 33% for the average project by 2025. The need to deliver these objectives has highlighted issues in the construction supply chain.

The construction industry supply chain is particularly "flat", which is to say that it is not dominated by higher tier organisations, and much work is contracted by primes to SMEs, which account for 86% of the employment and 75% of the turnover in the sector¹. Primes report that supply chain companies tend to focus on the short to mid-term and on their upcoming work – there is therefore less awareness of strategic objectives and the long-term direction of the industry. As such, construction primes will be reliant on their supply chain SMEs to deliver against Construction 2025 objectives, but these objectives are not generally appreciated or being generally acted against in these SMEs. Engaging with the construction supply chain, is therefore essential for major industry players.

Some partner companies in the Supply Chain Sustainability School were of the opinion that these demands could only be delivered by a radical change in practices, and offsite construction is one potential solution. In particular, the Head of Innovation at Skanska, had lobbied for an extension of the School which would develop the ability of the construction supply chain to construct offsite.

Not all organisations agreed that this innovative approach was a priority, and so the new School was established as a separate entity. Work on it began in late 2013, and continued through 2014, as Skanska lobbied through industry networks and events, and the responsible Director at Action Sustainability managed initial contact with prospective partners. By March 2014, Carillion, Costain, Siemens and Skanska were committed to the School (with Laing O'Rourke joining the partnership at a later date having made contact through shared involvement in the UK Futures Programme.)

All partners interviewed had pre-existing concerns in this regard and had already made commitments to improve their supply chain generally, and the offsite skills of the supply chain specifically.

- Skanska has made engaging with and developing its supply chain a priority. It wishes to promote a more collaborative approach both between itself and its supply chain, and between supply chain companies, and the development of offsite capabilities feeds into this.

¹ <http://projects.bre.co.uk/sme/Download/Journ.PDF>

- Carillion is aiming to integrate its construction and facilities management roles and increasingly take responsibility for the “whole life cycle” of the buildings they construct. This will require high levels of communication with all parts of their supply chain, and any prefabricated elements of buildings they manage will have to be effectively and efficiently developed.
- Costain have established “Factory Thinking” as a key value of their company, which involved on the one hand greater integration between themselves, their customer and their supply chain, and on the other hand, greater use of more efficient offsite practices.

These activities provide the backdrop in which the individuals involved signed up to the School.

The project shared similar governance arrangements to the Supply Chain Sustainability School. Action Sustainability organised monthly meetings of a steering group consisting of all partners, which oversaw the development of the online modules for a launch in March 2014, and which then focused on expanding, promoting and improving the School. Learning gathered during the development of the modules was shared with the Supply Chain Sustainability School, and both were overseen by a shared board elected by the partners concerned.

5 How was collaboration established and ensured, and what were the motivations for companies to collaborate?

During the project, different companies and individuals from across the industry supported each other and co-operated to achieve the School's objectives. The School was reliant on both a significant amount of collaboration, and a high level of commitment from collaborators, in agreeing and developing the training, engaging end users, and in its day-to-day operations.

Three distinct types of collaborative effort took place during the project:

- Collaboration between employees of different primes in the governing partnership
- Collaboration by the companies represented by the partnership
- Collaboration from the wider industry and supply chain to support the objectives of the School.

The factors behind this willingness to collaborate, and the conditions for effective collaboration, will be explored below.

5.1 Collaboration between individuals in the governing partnership

5.1.1 The individual partners were brought together through a shared perspective on the issue and concerted networking

As the partners representing supply chain primes worked for separate and competing companies, the conditions had to be correct for them to agree to put time and effort into the School. All of these partners joined the School under shared conditions:

Partners therefore had common ground and a desire to see change in the industry that preceded the partnership, and were in the right position in their companies to commit time and resources to the School. This was turned into action by leadership from Skanska and Action Sustainability on an issue which was seen to be important.

- **Personal and professional incentives to get involved:** All partners had some responsibility for innovation, offsite practices or the construction supply chain. The School lined up with existing interests and supported existing objectives.
- **A common perspective on the construction industry and its issues:** As previously stated, offsite construction is not universally seen as the solution to 2025 objectives, and not all individuals in the industry were prepared to take on the risk of an innovative solution. The partners that signed up had common ground and a pre-existing desire to act on this issue, and potential partners were vetted to make sure that they shared this perspective.
- **Recognition that the issue had to be solved collaboratively:** All partners interviewed indicated that individual effort to upskill the construction supply chain in this way would have been wasted.
- **Lobbying and partnership-building activities:** For 9 months before the launch of the School, Skanska's Head of Innovation had been promoting and discussing it at industry events, spreading word and building support, and in this way identified interested individuals and secured commitments.

“Again, I come back to the Construction Report 2025. We’ve written it in conjunction with the government. We cannot deliver 50% quicker by doing the same things. We have to adopt different techniques and approaches and that’s what we’re doing. We are rushing to embrace it rather than running away in fear from it or sticking our head in the sand, hoping it’s all going to go away.”

Head of Supply Chain, Costain

5.1.2 The partnership worked effectively thanks to clear project management and the experience of Action Sustainability

The partnership was viewed by the partners as smooth and effective because it comprised trusting partners willing to co-operate, clear objectives to work towards, and effective project management. This was facilitated by the strong commitment of the partners to the project, and by the strategic and operational input of Action Sustainability.

Before inception, informal conversations were held between Action Sustainability’s responsible director and each partner, to establish initial aims and common ground, and to gauge how the individual would fit into the partnership.

The first three monthly meetings of the project were occupied with establishing the vision and goals of the partnership, a process that came out of Action Sustainability's experience of the previous Supply Chain Sustainability School. Each partner had a similar understanding of the issues in construction and had agreed on offsite delivery as a solution, but came from companies that viewed the issues in different ways and had different ways of talking about offsite construction. From this, a shared set of priorities and intended outcomes were agreed and subscribed to, which proved important as the project proceeded:

- It established the common ground on which the co-operation would take place, and this ground was agreed by all partners. Each partner had a clear idea of what they had signed up to achieve, and trusted that the project would not stray into unproductive or commercially sensitive areas.
- It kept the project on track and gave a direction in times of disagreement. On more than one occasion, disputes about the direction of the School were resolved by agreeing whether they fit with the School's objectives.
- It ensured a common language and set of ideas was used when members of the partnership were communicating externally.

“We had to agree a common language which we would talk about, offsite skills ... everybody was actually teaching or wanting to teach the same thing to their supply chain but they were calling everything something different so one of the big, big pieces of work that we agreed on was that we needed to agree what we meant by industrialisation or design and manufacturing assembly or offsite.”

Director, Action Sustainability

Action Sustainability project-managed the partnership and provided its governance structure and procedures, and were universally praised for this, as a vital part of the project. They were referenced by several partners as being helpful more generally, as an intermediary without direct commercial interests in construction, in establishing a culture of collaboration and common concerns.

From the operation of the partnership, a number of lessons can be drawn:

- **The individuals involved had a shared understanding of the issues coming in to the partnership**, which made them willing and likely to co-operate.
- **Common goals were useful** for peace of mind of the partners, ironing out small disputes, and holding common ground in the event of disagreement between partners from different companies.
- **Solid day to day project management** was needed to keep the partnership efficient and the partners content, and in this case, Action Sustainability performed this role effectively as a skilled and neutral intermediary.
- **Once individuals are in an established and well-grounded partnership, the process of co-operation is smooth and relatively straightforward**: differences between companies outside of the partnership were no longer really relevant.

5.2 The companies represented by the partners committed significant time and support, because the aims of the School were shared by parts of the wider company

As well as the funding provided and the time of the individual partners, the prime companies involved in the partnership engaged in a wide range of activities to promote the aims of the School and ensure the success of the collaboration. This went above the basic requirements of membership in the School and demonstrated a wider commitment to its objectives.

The companies involved in the School provided in addition:

- The time of other employees, to provide expert advice during the development of the online modules and resource library
- The co-operation of procurement departments in communicating about the School to the supply chain, so that information about it came out of companies' official channels
- The presence of senior management figures and major customers at launch events, workshops and supplier days.

In order for this to be viable, the project had to secure both agreement from parts of senior management about the importance of the School and its aims, and the support of colleagues at a similar level in the organisation to the partners. Whilst it would be inaccurate to say that the entirety of every company involved in the School was fully aware and committed, this reflects a level of company commitment, which was achieved due to a broader strategic alignment with the goals of the School:

- **It made economic sense to commit resources for the School:** Carillion, for example, is reliant on its supply chain to deliver the increase in offsite processes that they project, and wanted to make this process as slick as possible by establishing communication.
- **Membership lined up with previous activities and objectives.** As previously mentioned, all partners interviewed had existing commitments to work on their supply chain, and in addition, Laing O'Rourke was already running an initiative to push forward "factory thinking" (offsite processes) amongst their suppliers.
- **Taking part supported these companies' branding/company identity:** they had taken part in drafting the Construction 2025 objectives and their senior position in the industry carries expectations to be responsible for the development of the industry to meet those objectives.
- **The issues faced by each partner with the shared supply chain are sector wide:** it was recognised that they could not effectively tackle them alone.

The process of securing commitment to the School was supported by: the involvement of Action Sustainability, who had a reputation in the industry from the success of the Supply Chain Sustainability School, and provided supporting materials for partners to present to their organisation; the involvement of other major industry players on this industry issue, which indicated a scope for significant changes which would impact the primes' supply chain; and the trust and personal relationships of individual partners, which made contacts within their organisations more willing to lend support.

The support and commitment of the wider company proved very important as the project progressed in ensuring that the supply chains were engaged. Official contact from the primes about the School signalled it was significant, and end-users specifically mentioned that the presence of senior management at School events was a factor in convincing them to sign up.

5.3 The industry was prepared to support as it was a major initiative on an important issue – support offered a chance to achieve impact or develop relationships

Collaboration took place at two tiers in the wider industry – at a high level, the input of industry bodies and of major companies in supporting and promoting the School; and at supply chain level, the input of supply chain companies in the testing and refining of the training.

Industry bodies Buildoffsite, CITB, and BRE were involved in the partnership and worked to further the aims of the project, with Buildoffsite promoting the School to its membership, and CITB part funding the piloting stage of the project. In addition to this, the materials and module developed as part of the Schools training were tested by JCB and Rolls Royce, though these companies were not involved with the partnership.

In the early stages of the project, the supply chain was also engaged, and suppliers of the primes were signed up to focus groups, which provided several rounds of feedback on the developing materials from an end-user perspective.

Engagement from major figures in the construction industry came from the networks of the partners and because of a shared appreciation or existing commitment to the issues raised by the School. Supply chain companies, on the other hand have more limited resources and would have been unlikely to invest time and resources in this fashion unless they perceived that they would benefit somehow. From discussions with both primes and their suppliers, there were a range of incentives to take part in testing the School:

- Some had a strong pre-existing relationship with one or more partners in the group: Costain, for example, had an existing core group of suppliers, who had a history of closely co-operating and engaged with Costain's strategic objectives, and from whom cold testers were selected.
- Some had a desire to establish or strengthen relationships. One of the end-users interviewed was not a customer to any of the partners, but had an interest in promoting their activities through one of the primes, having been put in contact through shared involvement with Buildoffsite.

- Some identified indirect, strategic benefits that might come from being seen to engage with industry issues, and working to resolve concerns that their company had with the industry - either from raising the profile of their company or gaining attention for what they saw as the issues of the industry.

The partnership was able to secure support and involvement at a range of levels in the industry. A number of factors supported this: the strength of the personal networks of the individuals involved, the influence of the organisation they represented, and the perceived importance of the issue that the project was aiming to address in certain circles.

5.4 Overall conclusions:

- The School captured the interest of a wide range of stakeholders using targeted networking and because it covered an issue about which there were existing concerns
- The individual partners engaged, and their companies, were already involved in activities of this nature and recognised the need for collaborative action.
- There were bodies and individuals in the construction industry looking for activity in the supply chain to promote offsite construction.
- Leadership on this issue from Skanska and Action Sustainability therefore provided an impetus to those parts of the industry that were prepared to act innovatively on this issue.
- The partnership itself ran smoothly thanks to effective project management, and to an atmosphere of co-operation brought about by the commitment of the partners to the project, agreement beforehand on goals, and the involvement of Action Sustainability as a neutral and co-ordinator.
- Both the partners involved and the companies they represented demonstrated a commitment to the project and the achievement of its objectives, and this was important both for the success of the partnership and the wider School.

6 How effectively did the School's training methods, and balance of online vs offline contact, support learning and impact?

6.1 The format of the training

In the run up to launch, the main focus of the School was to develop the 12 modules which would be its core training materials. The ground that the modules would cover was first agreed by the primes as a group, after which, the modules themselves were developed by individual project teams, headed by a partner, and supported by members of the training consultancies involved in the partnership.

The modules were subject to several rounds of feedback, review and redevelopment, with groups of suppliers and industry experts consulting on several iterations for content and language before they were sent back to the main partnership for final approval. In this sense, whilst end-users did not have a direct say on what areas the School offered training in, they did help to shape and approve the training as it was developed.

The modules were delivered through an online platform, which end-users would access upon signing up to the School. They would conduct a self-assessment which ranked their competencies in various areas, after which an action plan was automatically produced which outlined their priority areas for development and the relevant modules for their skill level. Each module was a roughly half-hour long audio-visual presentation, finishing with a short test to assess learning.

6.2 Online training was an effective way to signpost and provide knowledge, but the School provided other ways to learn, and impact relied on presenting incentives to apply what was learned

The online modules were the School's primary method of delivering training and information to the supply chain about the opportunities and the requirements that offsite construction presented to the industry. Online delivery was chosen because it was flexible, but primarily because of its potential reach – the intent was to influence as much of the supply chain as possible, which would not have been feasible via face to face training. All training and material offered by the School was offered free of charge, to maximise its reach. In nature, the modules were introductions to areas in which supply chain companies had shown a need for development, with some modules pitched at a more advanced level than others.

Partners talked about the project as a means of communicating with the supply chain. The demands placed on primes in construction by their own customers, and the long term commitment to Construction 2025 objectives, give them a set of priorities and development needs, which currently do not line up with the priorities of many companies in the supply chain. A main purpose of the School was signalling to the supply chain what the expectations of primes were, and the modules were a central part of this. However, as the ultimate goal of the School was a shift in attitudes, partners wanted suppliers to do more than simply go through the modules suggested to them – the desired changes in skills and approaches would come from engaging with the material in the modules.

“I think it’s raising an industry’s knowledge level of what the opportunity is and what the aspirations of our customers are, which they don’t necessarily get to see ... So it’s an infrastructure to support people to understand more.”

Head of BIM, Carillion

For this reason, the School organised a programme of engagement activities, intended to communicate the message behind the School (the need for the supply chain to upskill), and to give supply chain companies a number of incentives to buy into it:

- The School was opened with a launch event hosted by Siemens and promoted by Buildoffsite to its membership, at which partners and industry figures hosted events and workshops highlighting the importance of the School’s material. Both Action Sustainability and individual partners contacted supply chain companies about the launch to ensure attendance, and 158 individuals attended.
- Each partner organised a supplier day, inviting key suppliers to an event at which the partners’ own customers talked about how the issues covered by the School were important on a business level.
- Training workshops were conducted which offered more depth and detail around certain aspects of offsite construction.
- Some partners involved their procurement departments directly in promoting the School to the supply chain, making it part of their introductory material to new suppliers or engaging in conversations with individual suppliers about it.

In this context, the modules signposted and introduced areas in which the partners believed their supply chains needed to develop. Engagement activities, meanwhile raised awareness of the School and its ethos, and offered different companies a range of reasons to develop in these areas. The modules were intended to have some direct upskilling effect, whilst also forming part of a wider toolkit which encouraged the supply chain to communicate with their customers and work to upskill themselves.

6.3 The School surpassed its initial engagement targets and had a wide reach and impact in the industry, but there is a chance that some end-users were more engaged than others.

End users responded to the promotion of the School – which exceeded its targets for number of suppliers engaged during the time period of the project, and at time of interview in September 2015 had 243 individual companies as members. The use of procurement departments to contact and persuade members and the profile of the School in the industry were effective at getting attention and sign-ups. The clear commitment of the primes involved, and the presence of senior management at events were mentioned as factors in the decision to join. The scope to network at School events and win business was also an incentive: primes prefer to do business with suppliers that they can see share their values and priorities, and more engaged suppliers are certainly aware of this.

As suppliers have to dedicate time and resources to taking part in and applying the training, they reported a need for clear evidence that involvement would lead to concrete business benefits such as more work and closer business relationships with customers.

In the limited range of companies interviewed, there is clear evidence of impact: one company has begun applying lessons from the training in their business, particularly the logistics module. They have also begun to communicate and collaborate more with suppliers in the same tier of the supply chain during offsite projects, improvements which are linked to messages communicated through the School. This company had been aware of the need for improvements in offsite practices in the industry before taking part in the training.

However, whilst a large number of companies have been signed up to the School, not all are fully engaged. Around half of the companies that sign up to the School go on to take a diagnostic and produce an action plan to select the relevant modules to their business. Some companies are only accessing the face-to-face elements of the School and as such will be engaging without using the modules, but this still suggests that not all suppliers involved in the School are accessing or applying a targeted programme of online training.

Going forward, there are plans to offer more targeted face-to-face training and for more presence at industry events, to secure the maximum engagement possible.

6.4 Overall conclusions

- Providers of online training should consider what the incentives to complete the training will be, and how the message and aims of the training might be supported offline.
- Supply chain influence can be used to get suppliers involved in a programme, and to secure genuine engagement with that programme, but securing engagement is more challenging and requires focused effort.
- End-users need incentives to complete and engage with online training. These can be internal and reflect the needs of the company itself, or can be external, and provided by customers through supply chain influence.
- Online training can have an impact on skills attitudes and practices in the right context, but is less effective if it is not supported.

7 Impact and Sustainability

The first phase of the project, up to the conclusion of Challenge 1 of the UK Futures Programme, was intended to prove the concept of the School and develop a solid base of companies from which to expand, and targets for membership in the School have been exceeded. Improvements in knowledge can be measured in those companies that reassess against the diagnostic, but improvements in skills will be harder to measure quantitatively in the short to medium term.

Partners will ultimately measure the success of the project by whether:

- The range and quality of offsite practices increases for companies engaged in the School
- The supply chain primes see increases in profitability and efficiency, and reduction in costs, from companies that are involved in the School.

Information against these goals is being monitored individually by the companies involved, supplementing the more high-level information available about engagement in the partner dashboard. This will feed into a wider process of improving efficiency in line with the construction 2025 report.

As reported above, initial results from the School were encouraging. However, the School had the most impact in companies that were committed to the programme and to applying the lessons from it, and this may reflect an existing awareness of industry issues or the need to improve. Finding out how to give more companies this form of incentive to commit will therefore be very important to the School going forward.

7.1 Long term goals

The partners are satisfied with the initial results, and bought into the School as a long term project. After UKCES funding runs out, the entire cost of the School will be met by the partners going forward, which will mean that the School will remain free at the point of use for supply chain companies, which is considered to be key if the School is to achieve its aims.

At this stage, the key aim is to maintain momentum and engage as much of the supply chain as possible, building the profile of the School. Eventually, it is intended to be a default resource for information about offsite construction with industry-wide recognition. The School has made progress towards this goal, and the intent of the steering group that oversees all Action Sustainability Schools is to reintegrate the now proven concept of the Offsite Management School into the wider Supply Chain Sustainability School.

The partnership is currently growing, and expanding down the supply chain, with United Utilities, a company that is a supplier to primes and also heads its own supply chain, recently joining as a partner.

Plans for more face to face training and a more structured approach to engaging end-users in additional training are in place to ensure maximum involvement. Partners will create a calendar of relevant industry events, publicise them to School members, and attend in person where appropriate.

Skanska in particular has an ambition for a linked “supply chain university” which would be considered the go-to resource for upskilling the supply chain in construction, fitting into broader objectives in this area, with the need to improve the supply chain more generally. There is an ongoing commitment, therefore, to investing in the supply chain by these primes.

The School can be seen as part of a process of continuing to establish a more collaborative or communicative relationship with their supply chains by the partners involved. All recognise the need for significant improvement. Skanska has used the School to begin a supply chain sorting exercise, and to consider which suppliers they will want to give most business to going forward. Costain were in discussions about involving their procurement department in promoting and considering the School, and all partners were more positive about doing business with companies that were engaging with the message of the School, and prepared to support the development necessary for the primes to achieve their strategic objectives.

8 Messages for stakeholders

Employers	UKCES	Policy Makers
<p>This partnership was able to achieve the industry impact it did because of the extent of the collaboration between the primes.</p> <p>Collaboration allowed sharing of knowledge and expertise, and a committed partnership was able to reach more of the supply chain than any single company could.</p> <p>Large companies can drive forward improvements in the skills of their suppliers by taking collective responsibility for them.</p> <p>More focused engagement with the offsite construction supply chain has reached a significant amount of companies, and developed new relationships with and between suppliers.</p>	<p>The partners were all committed to the success of the project for clear business reasons, and this commitment was key to engaging the supply chain and ensuring the success of the project.</p> <p>The choice of sector and issue fed into existing ideas and ambitions – making the right choice here helped secure commitment and collaboration.</p> <p>Online training can be effective but it should be made clear exactly how the training proposed will lead to a material improvement in skills.</p> <p>In this case an intermediary helped establish and facilitate collaboration – without them, someone else would have had to take a governance/project management role.</p>	<p>Government has a mandate to set the agenda for collective action by industry – the demand for this project came from the Construction 2025 report.</p> <p>A relatively small amount of funding can have a major impact if targeted correctly at the right issues and industry players.</p> <p>With the right industry involvement and engagement activities, it is possible to upskill companies by encouraging them to upskill themselves.</p>

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is a publicly funded, industry-led organisation providing leadership on skills and employment issues across the UK. Together, our Commissioners comprise a social partnership of senior leaders of large and small employers from across industry, trade unions, the third sector, further and higher education and across all four UK nations.

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