

News story: Employer survey reveals attitudes to vocational qualifications

Ofqual has today (18 July 2017) [published its first employer qualifications perceptions survey](#) which asked over 2,000 employers for their views on vocational and technical qualifications and assessments. These included functional skills in English and maths and the end-point assessments of apprenticeships. The survey marks a significant step for Ofqual in increasing its understanding of what employers think about the qualifications they use when making decisions about who to hire, which training to invest in, and what business impact they expect to see from staff who achieve those qualifications.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, commented:

With major reform of apprenticeship assessment and functional skills in English and maths already underway, and the introduction of the government flagship T level programme on the horizon, there has never been a more important time to hear what employers have to say about qualifications and assessments.

Phil Beach, Executive Director of Vocational and Technical Qualifications, added:

We are committed to supporting the government's ambitious reform programme. This valuable research is a significant step in our plans to engage more closely with employers and understand their needs and views of vocational and technical qualifications.

We now have an in-depth source of new data to draw upon as we aim to understand the reasons why qualifications in particular sectors do (and do not) work well for employers. The data provides a baseline of employer perceptions, which will be monitored and explored through further engagement with the employers, learners and teaching staff who use these qualifications and assessments.

The survey found that familiarity with qualification reform varies by industrial sector. For example, nearly twice as many respondents from the transport and logistics sector (40%) reported awareness and understanding of functional skills reform than employers from the hospitality sector (23%). These results should help Ofqual target future engagement with sectors that have less familiarity with qualifications to understand whether this is the driver in their lower uptake.

The survey also found that 65% of employers who recruit staff to skilled or supervisory roles consider it essential for applicants to hold a relevant

vocational or technical qualification. This was a higher proportion than employers who required applicants to hold A levels (48%) for those type of roles. Conversely, holding a relevant vocational or technical qualification is much less important for employers when recruiting to other roles, with only 46% considering it essential for professional and managerial roles. This information will help Ofqual understand how employers use qualifications according to job types and levels within an organisation.

Elsewhere the study showed that higher proportions of respondents in the public sector say their organisation recruits people with, or arranges training leading to functional skills qualifications, compared to respondents in the private and third/voluntary sector. Ofqual wants to understand why there is a greater reliance on functional skills qualifications in the public sector, and whether other sectors have lower levels of confidence in them.

The '[Employer Qualifications Perceptions Survey](#)' was a pilot project conducted by Pye Tait, who interviewed senior managers with responsibility for recruitment and training decisions from a range of employers. This was a representative sample of industrial sector, employee size and region. Fieldwork took place between February and March 2017 using a quantitative telephone methodology. The intention is to run further studies to build up a longitudinal view of the extent to which employers have confidence in vocational and technical qualifications.

Statement to Parliament: HS2 update: Phase 2a and Phase 2b

I am grateful to you for allowing this statement, Mr Speaker. I am pleased to be here in front of the House tonight. As you know, sometimes these things can happen as a result of cock-up rather than conspiracy.

Today (17 July 2017) marks a major milestone in the government's plans to deliver High Speed 2. High Speed 2 will deliver economic growth across the United Kingdom. It will provide the rail network with the capacity we need for the next century, faster journeys and better connections between cities across the UK.

As [announced to the House this morning](#), we will be awarding stage 1 of the main works civil engineering contracts for the Phase One route from London to Birmingham. This stage primarily covers design and pre-construction activities, although it is worth saying that the initial works have already begun. We expect these contracts to be signed by the end of this month after the completion of the mandatory standstill period. The expected total value of these contracts covering stages 1 and stage 2, which is the full construction phase, is £6.6 billion. They will support around 16,000 jobs across the country and are expected to generate around 7,000 contract

opportunities in the supply chain, of which I expect around 60% to go to small and medium-sized enterprises. I have also confirmed the shortlists for the station design contracts and Euston master development partner procurements.

As well as that announcement, today I am introducing the [Phase 2a High Speed Rail \(West Midlands – Crewe\) Bill](#) to the House. This seeks the powers to construct [HS2 from the West Midlands to Crewe](#) so that this important section, which links up to the West Coast Main Line just south of Crewe, can open in 2027.

The design of the route set out in the Bill is largely as announced in 2015. However, there are [3 refinements I have decided to make](#), following [consultation last year](#). I have decided to move the connection to the West Coast Main Line and the start of a tunnel in Crewe further south. I have also decided to move the construction railhead, and subsequently the infrastructure maintenance facility for this part of HS2, from the Basford area near Crewe to a location near Stone. I am very sensitive to the impact that that could have on the local community, which my Hon Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) has diligently drawn to my attention, but I believe this site is a better location from which to construct and maintain Phase 2a. The new location near Stone is strategically located midway along the Phase 2a route, which means that it can support construction activities heading north and south simultaneously, offering significant programme and construction benefits. Of course, the site at Stone benefits from good transport links, with access to the M6 and the existing rail network right at that location.

In Crewe, moving the railhead from the Basford area avoids planned housing regeneration in that part of Cheshire. It also negates the need for maintenance loops at Pipe Ridware, thereby reducing impacts along the Phase 2a route. It is worth saying that that area of Basford is one of Cheshire's most significant economic development and housing development sites, and I have been very sensitive to that. The construction railhead and infrastructure maintenance facility have been carefully designed so as to minimise impacts locally, particularly on the community of Yarnfield. Having heard local concerns, I have made sure that Yarnfield Lane will remain open.

In preparing the Bill, HS2 Ltd has sought to minimise impacts on the environment and on communities. Following the deposit of the Bill, there will be a [consultation on the scheme's environmental statement](#). That will provide the opportunity to comment on the [environmental effects of the proposed Phase 2a scheme](#) and the [reasonable alternatives](#) considered and reported by HS2 Ltd. The process will result in a report from an independent assessor, which will be provided to all Members of the House before Second Reading.

Turning to Crewe, the HS2 business case has always included 2 trains per hour stopping at Crewe. The Phase 2a Bill includes the interventions needed to support that, but I know that there is a strong ambition to achieve even more. Today, I am therefore launching a [consultation on options to develop a Crewe Hub](#). This work shows how such a service pattern could support an HS2 service to Stoke-on-Trent and bring benefits to places like Chester, north

and south Wales, Shrewsbury and Derby. Future decisions will be subject to affordability and value for money. Funding the broader vision for a Crewe Hub will require national and local government to work together, but I believe that there is the potential to deliver even more benefits.

Finally today, I am announcing my [decision on the outstanding sections of the Phase 2b route](#) to Manchester and Leeds, which we [consulted on last year](#). After carefully considering the responses to the consultation, I have decided to confirm the following changes to the route. The western leg rolling stock depot will move from a site near Golborne to a site north of Crewe. That site will be included in the full environmental assessment being undertaken for the whole route and I will look carefully at that assessment.

A 26 km section of the route in the Middlewich and Pickmere area of Cheshire will change and be raised as it passes through the Cheshire salt plains, to avoid brining and gas storage infrastructure. The approach to Manchester Piccadilly station will be adjusted to improve operational efficiency and reduce impacts on residential areas and a primary school. The route near East Midlands airport will now closely follow the eastern side of the A42. This avoids tunnelling under the airport and reduces the impacts on some communities. At Long Eaton, after much consultation with the local community, the route will pass through the town on a high viaduct.

The route in South Yorkshire will be the route we consulted on in 2016, which in part follows the M1 and M18, and serves Sheffield city centre via a spur from the HS2 line. I am also asking HS2 Ltd to take forward the provision of a northern junction back on to HS2, giving a city centre to city centre connection between Leeds and Sheffield in less than 30 minutes. That is very important for the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail. We will also continue to work on a possible parkway station.

Finally, I have decided not to proceed with the proposed change of route to the east of Measham. Instead, I am confirming a modified version of the 2013 preferred route to the west of Measham. In Measham itself, the route is moved approximately 80 metres and the viaduct extended to mitigate commercial property impacts. I have heard the concerns raised by local communities about the proposed eastern leg rolling stock depot at Crofton. HS2 Ltd believes it has found a [better option](#), on which I am now consulting, which is east of Leeds in the Aire valley, adjacent to the M1 on a brownfield site.

I intend to bring forward a third hybrid Bill for phase 2b in 2019. In preparation for that Bill, HS2 Ltd is today launching a consultation on the technical scope and methodology to be used in the [environmental](#) and [equality](#) impact assessments.

Today's decisions bring certainty for communities who have been unsure of the route for some years. I am updating the [safeguarding directions](#) for the Phase 2b route to protect the land required for the construction and operation of the line. I can also confirm that the same range of property schemes currently operating for phases One and 2a will be available for Phase 2b. This goes over and above what is required by law and gives assistance to those along the line of the route. I have also made amendments to some of the

detailed urban/rural boundaries for Phase 2b and to the treatment of properties around tunnel portals.

A [report published today by property specialists Carter Jonas](#) tells us that the particular circumstance of the Shimmer estate development in Mexborough, South Yorkshire means that this package may not allow some homeowners to acquire a similar property in their local area. In the light of the report's findings, I therefore also confirm that the government will ensure that Shimmer homeowners can secure a comparable home, as referred to in my summary document [High Speed Two: from concept to reality](#), which is also being published today. That is really important.

We need HS2. Since privatisation, the number of passenger journeys on our railways has doubled. It has nearly tripled on the key west coast inter-city corridor. We cannot continue to rely on the legacy of our Victorian forebears, far-sighted though they were. By providing new routes for inter-city services, HS2 will free up space on our existing railways. It will reduce overcrowding and allow options for more varied and frequent services, including for places that currently do not have a good connection to London. This released capacity could allow more freight trains. It could also more than double the current number of peak-time seats on busy services from Manchester Piccadilly towards Stoke and Crewe, and from Leeds towards Wakefield. It has the potential to almost double peak seats from London to Peterborough and east coast destinations further north.

Any significant investment needs to offer good value for money, as HS2 does. Today I am publishing the updated [business case for Phase Two](#), which shows that, including the wider economic benefits, the full HS2 network will create £2.30 of benefit for every £1 spent. We want to make the most of our investment in HS2. When Phase One becomes operational, HS2 trains will run to Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Warrington, Wigan and Glasgow. Phase Two will further reduce journey times between London and Glasgow and Edinburgh to around 3 hours and 40 minutes. To my Scottish colleagues, let me say that we will continue to work with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to look at the best ways of further reducing times, towards an ultimate ambition of a 3 hour journey time between London and Scotland. □We are also looking at opportunities to use HS2 to support Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Connect.

Finally, I know that today's announcement will not be welcome news for those living along the line of the route. There will be concern about how HS2 will affect their homes, communities and businesses. That, sadly, is inevitable if we are going to do big projects of this kind for our nation, but I am determined that we will engage extensively with everyone affected and that we will show fairness, compassion and respect. All the products mentioned today are in the Libraries of both Houses.

Our plan for Britain is a plan to build a stronger, fairer country, with an economy that works for everyone—one in which wealth and opportunity are spread across the country and we are set up to succeed in the long term. Investment in economic infrastructure is a key part of this. HS2 will be the new backbone of the UK rail network. It will transform a rail network built

for the 19th century into one designed for the 21st century. It will increase capacity and connectivity across our rail network, bring our country closer together and support economic growth. The benefits of HS2 will be felt across the whole of the United Kingdom. I commend the statement to the House.

[Press release: HM Land Registry signals the start of its transformation](#)

HM Land Registry today released its Annual Report and Accounts, setting out its priorities for an ambitious digital transformation towards becoming the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data. This will include helping to identify areas that may be suitable for housing through the aim of comprehensive registration of land in England and Wales.

This is the first annual report and accounts HM Land Registry has published since it was announced by the government that it shall remain in the public sector and focus on becoming a digital and data-driven business.

Graham Farrant, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar, said:

To our many stakeholders, I would ask you to join, support and partner with us as we explore how through digital technology we can work together to make conveyancing quicker, cheaper and simpler for everyone.

HM Land Registry aims to begin the comprehensive registration of land in England and Wales. The initial focus will be on prioritising public sector land in order to provide an early indication of the scale of potential sites for house building and associated infrastructure needs.

Alongside the improved registration of land, the transformation will also involve working with the private sector to research and test new digital registers, potentially exploring blockchain, a plan HM Land Registry is calling 'Digital Street'.

By changing how it works internally and moving to become a more digitally data-driven organisation, HM Land Registry will aim to meet the changing needs of its customers, testing new ideas with them that could make conveyancing simpler, faster and cheaper.

Responding to a government commitment to drive innovation in the digital

economy, HM Land Registry will open up more of its datasets externally and across government to support infrastructure development, financial security, tax collection, law enforcement and national security.

Graham Farrant, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar, further said:

Alongside the key role we already play in the property market, our transformation will help support the UK in developing a vibrant and innovative digital economy. Our plans not only involve the digitisation of our existing services but we will explore how, through new digital technology, we can help to potentially release even more value from the Land Register.

Notes to Editor:

1. Access the [HM Land Registry Annual Report and Accounts 2016/17](#).
2. In the 2016 Autumn Statement, it was announced that HM Land Registry should focus on becoming a more digital data-driven registration business in the public sector.
3. In February 2017, [the Housing White Paper](#) 'Fixing our broken housing market' committed HM Land Registry to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data with an aim to achieve comprehensive registration of land in England and Wales by 2030.
4. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
5. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, HM Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.
6. With the largest transactional property database of its kind detailing more than 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.
7. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
8. Follow us on Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](#) and find us on our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#)

and [Facebook](#).

Press release: Dean of Peterborough: Timothy Kitson Sledge

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Reverend Canon Timothy Charles Kitson Sledge, MA, Vicar of Romsey and Area Dean in the Diocese of Winchester, to be appointed to the Deanery of the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Saint Andrew, Peterborough, on the resignation of the Very Reverend Charles William Taylor, MA, on 6 October 2016.

Reverend Canon Tim Sledge, (aged 53) studied Music at Ripon and York St John's College then studied at York University for his MA. He studied for ordination at Trinity College, Bristol. His first curacy was at Huddersfield, in Wakefield Diocese from 1995 to 1998 before becoming Vicar at Luddenden with Luddenden Foot in Wakefield Diocese from 1998 to 2003.

In addition, from 2002 to 2003 he was Priest-in-Charge at Sowerby in the Diocese of Wakefield. From 2003 to 2008 he was Diocesan Missioner Enabler in the Diocese of Peterborough. Since 2008 he has been Vicar of Romsey in the Diocese of Winchester and since 2013 Area Dean. He is an Honorary Canon at Winchester Cathedral.

He has written and contributed to several books including Youth Emmaus and Mission Shaped Parish. He also wrote Creative Communion (BRF 2008) and contributed to Daily Reflections for Common Worship (Canterbury Press 2015).

Tim is Chairman of the Young Vocations Strategy Group for the Church of England, is a trustee of Triangulate – a Romsey Mental Health Charity, and has strong links with the Anglican Province of Burundi.

Tim is married to Caroline, and has two stepchildren, Grace (20) and Matt (18).

He enjoys cooking, poetry, golf and the arts, attending concerts and visiting art galleries.

News story: Government delivering over

£450 billion in major UK projects

The [Infrastructure and Projects Authority \(IPA\)](#) has published its [2016 to 17 annual report on major projects](#), reporting 143 major projects on the Government's Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP), worth £455.5 billion and spread across 17 government departments.

The report is in support of the IPA's ongoing purpose to improve the way infrastructure and major projects are delivered and the government's commitment to transparency and delivering public services effectively and efficiently.

Projects currently on the GMPP reflect the government's priorities; making our infrastructure fit for the 21st Century, maintaining the security of the realm and modernizing and digitizing our public services.

The [annual report](#) provides a snapshot of how well these projects are progressing as of September 2016. The data shows a steady improvement in the way that government is delivering major projects:

- over 60% of projects by whole life cost are likely to be successfully delivered
- since last year's report, the number of at risk projects has reduced from 44 to 38, which continues to be an improvement from 48 the previous year
- transformation projects continue to make up the largest category of the GMPP with 40 projects
- the infrastructure and construction sector is the largest area of growth on the GMPP, reaching a record value of £222.5 billion

The government has successfully completed a number of projects during the last year such as DCMS's Super Connected Cities Programme, which enabled an extra 42,500 small business across the UK to have access to faster broadband.

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service, said:

This year's report continues to reflect a broad and ambitious government agenda with transformation and infrastructure and construction remaining key priorities.

The data shows signs of steady improvement in the way government is delivering major projects. All government projects are designed to improve the lives of our citizens. As we continue to deliver, the

benefits of these projects will be felt by the public.

Tony Meggs, Chief Executive of the IPA, said:

We know that success or failure of a project is often determined in its earliest phases. That is why the IPA is focussing its efforts on engaging and supporting specific projects in the early stages of their development.

We will continue to work with departments and industry as early as possible on their projects, so we can help ensure they are set up for success.