

Visa decisions should follow long-term strategy, not short-term political pressure says BCIS chief economist

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In response to newly announced measures by the government to reform Britain's "broken" migration system via tougher visa rules, Dr David Crosthwaite, chief economist at the Building Cost Information Service ([BCIS](#)), has shared his comments.

Dr Crosthwaite draws parallels between the care sector and the construction industry, and shares his thoughts on what needs to be done in both the short and long term if the government is serious about delivering 1.5 million homes and improving national infrastructure.

He said: *"Starmer promised a government for builders, not blockers – but the workforce strategy risks not having enough builders to start with.*

"Much of the recent debate over visa reforms has centred on care workers, but there are clear parallels within the construction industry.

"Both sectors have historically relied on migrant labour when domestic supply has fallen short – and both sectors currently face persistent challenges in attracting UK workers; challenges that appear to run deeper than pay and conditions alone.

"Perceptions of job status, long-term security and career progression all seem to play a role in deterring domestic interest in these vital roles.

"If the government is serious about delivering 1.5 million homes and boosting national infrastructure

delivery, they must seek both short-term and long-term solutions.

“Yes, we need to invest in training and apprenticeships, encourage more direct employment and rebuild the domestic skills base for the long-term; but that takes time.

“In the meantime, it is critical that we can access migrant workers where there’s a clear economic need, or else risk stalling growth and delivery even further.

“Without transitional measures, tightening migration rules could increase costs, delay projects, and make it even harder to meet ambitious targets. Workforce decisions need to be grounded in long-term strategy, not short-term political pressure.”