

BCIS calls for investment action after Labour's sluggish start

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Construction cost and carbon experts at the [Building Cost Information Service](#) (BCIS) are calling for more decisive investment action from the government after a slow first year in power.

Chief economist Dr David Crosthwaite said the government must prioritise a transparent and detailed infrastructure project pipeline that investors can get behind, as well as allocate public sector funding to new work to prompt economic growth.

Dr Crosthwaite said: “The government has had a difficult first year. Some of the challenges faced have been external, but some have been of its own making.

“We’ve had NISTA’s commitment to an ‘investor-focused’ pipeline but what’s desperately needed is a clear outline of projects and increased public sector investment in construction. This, with a more stable wider economic environment, should spur the private sector to invest.

“Specifically, the government must invest in fixed assets. This means building hospitals, roads, schools, prisons and not just new assets, but renovations too. This is clearly not going to happen overnight so it’s important that the government is transparent and realistic with its project pipeline.”

The BCIS team also called on the government to address labour capacity issues in construction.

BCIS head of data services Karl Horton said: “There’s huge appetite for infrastructure development, but the construction industry faces the same challenges that have existed for at least last two decades. If Labour doesn’t address these head on, it risks undermining its entire economic campaign. That’s the bottom line.

“Capacity is perhaps the biggest problem. Undertaking complex, large-scale schemes like the Lower Thames Crossing requires specialists. In most cases, the industry needs skilled labour, not just extra hands.

“Labour’s aim is to substitute overseas labour with training up workers in the UK, but if this isn’t delivering results, the government must be upfront and prepared to change tack.”

BCIS executive director James Fiske, who is also chair of the Built Environment Carbon Database steering group, argued the government must invest in data and standardising embodied carbon assessments to support its green agenda.

He said: “The aim should be to make carbon assessing as simple as possible. Mapping the requirements of whole life carbon assessments (WLCAs) in policy, mandating carbon assessments in planning or building regulations, and investing in tools and training that empower people to collect and use data easily, must be the first ports of call.

“Several European countries are already leagues ahead. INIES, France’s national reference database on environmental and health data for construction products and equipment, is a prime example. The benefits of replicating a similar system in the UK could be a game-changer for understanding our embodied carbon output more explicitly.”

The calls for action follow doubts over the feasibility of the government’s 1.5 million housebuilding target and stagnated construction output in the first quarter of 2025.

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