



FEDERATION OF
**MASTER
BUILDERS**

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Building a stronger construction industry

**FMB Programme for Government
for the Northern Ireland Executive
2022 - 2027**

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We are calling on the industry, the Northern Ireland Executive and Members of the Legislative Assembly to work together to maximise the positive impact that the construction sector has on Northern Ireland.

The FMB has five key asks of the incoming Executive.

1. Establish a VAT reimbursement fund for home repair, maintenance, and energy efficiency improvements

Removing VAT to help stimulate demand for improvements to the fabric and energy efficiency of NI's homes. The NI Executive should:

- Deliver and adequately fund the Northern Ireland energy strategy, published in December 2021. The built environment is responsible for around 40% of the UK's total carbon emissions.
- Develop a Northern Ireland Retrofit Strategy and provide a clear pipeline of work to give quality contractors confidence to invest.
- Invest in developing skills locally and improve cross-departmental collaboration to help NI achieve climate change targets.

- Link building control standards, planning direction, and public tendering processes to incentivise environmentally driven construction methods.

2. Address the acute, worsening skills gap

The NI Executive must act swiftly and decisively to prevent the skills crisis accelerating. The NI Executive should:

- Increase funding for construction vocational education and drive change to ensure parity of esteem between vocational and academic learning.
- Recognise and assist the commitment made by employers, many of which are SMEs, to tutor, mentor and invest in training others.
- Address high dropout rates from construction courses to construction jobs.
- Help diversify the sector by addressing the barriers for under-represented groups.

3. Reform the planning system

The current planning performance statistics are a serious indictment of the need for change and are

an inhibitor to progress. The NI Executive should:

- Change the underperforming system. Sadly, many skilled homebuilders are looking to work outside of NI due to the failings of the current system.
- Increase resources for local planning authorities and develop a more accountable system for missing deadlines.
- Recognise the accumulative impact of regulations on SMEs by taking a more holistic approach to regulations.
- Learn from other regions and nations of the UK and beyond to improve the turn-around of applications.

4. Deliver an ambitious Housing Supply Strategy

The recent Department of Communities consultation needs to be resourced and provide leadership to deliver essential housing targets. The NI Executive should:

- Invest in 10,000 homes annually over the next term to give the sector much needed impetus and encourage more local firms to work within NI.

- Utilise a multi-year budget to deliver social and private housing.
- Bring forward local development plans to provide greater certainty to housebuilders.
- Deliver a scheme that offers public sector land that is "shovel ready" for development to encourage SMEs to return to house building.

5. Simplify the tendering process

Public sector construction contracts must be made more accessible for SMEs. The NI Executive should:

- End the "race to the bottom" in tendering and low-price allocations, used by some Departments which drives down quality and delivery. Bargain basement procurement is a disaster for the industry and community. This needs to stop and a true value placed on quality.
- Allow flexibility to enable public sector clients to respond to unprecedented material costs that contractors face, which are driven by a global market.
- Adopt a consistent approach towards procurement and payment for all Government Departments.



The construction industry in Northern Ireland is a key economic driver

65,000+
employed

The number of people employed in the sector



Annual revenue generated by construction



The percentage of construction apprentices trained by SMEs



About the Federation of Master Builders

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK construction industry representing thousands of firms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Established in 1941 to protect the interests of small and medium sized construction firms, the FMB is independent and non-profit making, lobbying for members' interests at both the national and local level.

For more information about the FMB please visit www.fmb.org.uk



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