As a Sector Skills Council and Industry Training Board, skills and training are the central core of CITB-ConstructionSkills NI’s business, and to this end, the organisation has upgraded their training grants scheme. “We understand the importance of training and the positive effects it can have both internally and externally,” said Barry Neilson, Chief Executive. “We also acknowledge the current economic climate across all sectors, in particular construction, and understand that in these hard times training is not always at the top of the business agenda.

“As an organisation we encourage a culture of training and assessment in the Northern Ireland construction industry and one of the ways we do this is through our grants scheme. Over the last year we have reviewed the way we structure our grants scheme and how it could be more beneficial to the employer and in turn the industry.”

The newly updated 2011/2012 £1.2million grant scheme helps facilitate training for the local construction industry. The grant application process has been simplified and offers employers further flexibility to claim whilst they train.

Employers can maximise their grant by 2.5% when they claim online and a further 2.5% when levy is paid by direct debit, BACs or standing order. *

The variety of grants available is reflective of the diversity of the construction industry and covers key initiatives such as qualifying existing workers, improving health and safety, and management and leadership. There are also grants now available to industry federations and/or representative bodies to encourage them to address the training needs of their members.

“Training is important and is essential for the future of the industry,” Barry continued. “We encourage and support training to ensure the right skills are in the right place at the right time.

“These are difficult times and it is the skills and qualifications of our workforce that will help us survive. We believe that those companies that have a fully trained workforce will have a competitive advantage over their rivals.”

For information on grants visit the website at www.citbcsni.org.uk/grants, contact a member of the Training Operations Support team on 028 9082 5466 or e-mail info@citbcsni.org.uk or come along and meet us at an employer information event.

* Full terms and conditions apply please see website for full details.
Training for the future

The Mobile Training Unit (MTU) provides a convenient way of meeting training requirements with minimum disruption to site work. The unit travels across Northern Ireland delivering short duration health and safety courses such as confined spaces, excavations, manual handling and working at heights, encouraging the industry to build safely. Free to all registered ‘In Scope’ employers, the MTU can be booked in advance.

SCAFFOLDING

We have launched new CISRS scaffolding training courses at Nutts Corner Training Centre. These courses include a five-day Basic Access Systems Erector Course (BASE) and a two-day Tube & Fitting Basic and an Advanced Scaffold Inspection course. On successful completion of these courses the relevant CISRS Scaffolding card will be issued. These new courses run alongside the existing CISRS programme of Scaffolding Part One, Part Two and Advanced courses working towards achievement of an NVQ and obtaining a Scaffolding or Advanced Scaffolding Card.

For more information on courses, visit the website www.citbcsni.org.uk or telephone 028 9082 5466.

Building a future for traditional skills

A new pilot scheme to help address skills shortages in the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings has been launched at the Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh. The event included a demonstration of traditional building skills by a number of local craftspeople, showing how these skills have survived and are relevant today.

The scheme has been developed by CITB-ConstructionSkills NI, with £240,300 funding from the UK-wide Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Skills for the Future’ programme. The programme is providing a unique opportunity for craftspeople in Northern Ireland to work and train alongside experienced practitioners from a range of leading heritage sector contractors and organisations on live projects.

For more information regarding the training opportunities within this project or if you work in the built heritage sector and could facilitate a 12-month funded placement, e-mail ciaran.mcmanus@swc.c.uk.

Medal success at international WorldSkills competition

Northern Ireland has triumphed at the global skills competition WorldSkills London 2011, winning gold, silver and bronze medals as part of Team UK. A gold medal in bricklaying was awarded to Philip Green, a student at Belfast Metropolitan College and self-employed at DG Green and Sons, Lisburn; a silver medal in landscape gardening went to James Cuffey, Downpatrick; while Stuart Millar, from Loughgall, an apprentice engineer at Shilliday Refrigeration, Armagh, and student at South Eastern Regional College, took the bronze medal in refrigeration and air-conditioning.

The event took place in October at ExCel in London, where more than 200,000 spectators from across the world watched 1,000 young skilled people from 50 countries compete over four days to be the best in the world in their skill.

In order to qualify for Team UK, Philip and Stuart had to first compete and win gold at the Skillbuild NI National Competition. Providing a unique stage to showcase excellence and talent, Skillbuild NI is hosted annually each spring when 100 top apprentices compete to win coveted titles in 12 different construction craft areas ranging from plumbing to brickwork.

Skillbuild NI has the support of the CITB-ConstructionSkills NI, the Department for Employment and Learning, the Construction Employers Federation and major sponsors such as H&J Martin, Gilbert-Ash, Haldane Fisher and Snickers Workwear. The winners of this competition qualified for the UK national finals via a selection process and gold medal winners at these finals were invited to join Team UK.

James equally competed in skills competitions at a regional and national level in landscaping in order to qualify for Team UK in this category.

David Cooper Chairman of Skillbuild NI said, “We are absolutely delighted for the medal winners and indeed all of those from Northern Ireland who were part of Team UK. The team have worked extremely hard over the last 12 months to perfect their skills and this has now been acknowledged with a gold, silver and bronze medal - a tremendous achievement.”

Celebrating success at WorldSkills 2011 are (from left) Linda Meldrum, DEL; Stuart Millar, bronze medal winner, refrigeration and air-conditioning; Barry Neilson, CITB ConstructionSkills NI; Philip Green, gold winner, bricklaying; David Cooper, Chairman of Skillbuild NI; Ian McManus, WorldSkills Team UK competitor in wall and floor tiling and Geraldine Keenan, DEL.
Local painters and decorators make traditional heritage picture perfect

Two stunning National Trust properties provided the inspiring setting for an innovative two-day course in November for 18 painters and decorators from across Northern Ireland. This bespoke training course on the repair and maintenance of painted decoration and wall coverings on traditional (pre-1919) buildings was hosted by CITB-ConstructionSkills NI in partnership with the Painting & Decorating Association (PDA) and the National Trust. Experts from the National Trust, the PDA and the private sector, including Belfast-based company Decowell, outlined the principles and legislation involved in caring for historic buildings and traditional paints and wallcoverings. The approach to this is quite different to working on modern buildings and the craftspeople were able to gain an informed understanding of how to undertake this type of work.

Barry Neilson, Chief Executive, CITB-ConstructionSkills NI, said, “Northern Ireland has a wealth of outstanding pre-1919 buildings and so we are delighted to be working in partnership with the PDA and the National Trust to help further develop the skills and knowledge of specialist craftspeople.

“By funding and organising this specific training we have responded to an industry need. We hope this will be the first of more courses on different traditional building skills in Northern Ireland aimed at increasing available skills and helping our older buildings to survive.”

The first day of the course was held at the beautiful 18th century grade A listed house at Castle Ward, Strangford and the second day at the equally inspiring neo-classical house at Mount Stewart, near Newtownards, again listed as Grade A.

A tour of both National Trust properties led by the course experts gave the delegates a once in a lifetime chance to see the different approaches necessary to care for the impressive decorative schemes. This included a fascinating insight into historic research, paint analysis and investigations, complex decision-making and in-situ cleaning, conservation and re-decoration - skills all vital to inform and carry out traditional maintenance and repairs. It also allowed close inspection of the work required as part of the £6 million repair programme due to start at Mount Stewart.

Qualifying the demolition sector

In order to address a key training need within the demolition sector, the Northern Ireland Demolition Association (NIDA) worked with the CITB-ConstructionSkills NI Employer Forum and developed specific skills development programmes for their sector. This included Quick Hitch training specific to demolition equipment, location of underground services training and QCF Level 2 NVQ qualifications for High Reach demolition machines.

NIDA, formed in the early 1990s, provides a forum for members to discuss topical issues within the demolition industry. Una McCormack from NIDA said, “The demolition companies wanted to develop their workforces further and gain recognised qualifications that would enable them to gain future business both locally and further afield. We recognised a training need and worked with CITB-ConstructionSkills NI to help deliver that training on a local basis.

“During the downturn we realise it’s critical for training to take place on an ongoing basis for the demolition industry to be a success, win contracts and have long-term benefits. NIDA’s involvement with the CITB-ConstructionSkills NI Employer Forum has been of considerable benefit in supporting the development of the demolition industry in Northern Ireland.”
The economic recession has had a significant impact on the local construction industry and CITB-ConstructionSkills NI is keen to help the industry address the current downturn and focus on the way ahead. With this in mind they have organised a series of free information events to provide construction employers with the latest information on training advice and guidance, grants, other funded training schemes and other services that are available as a registered employer.

The information events are now running into their second year with over 200 employers attending the events last year. In 2012, 16 dates will be held province-wide from Ballymena to Banbridge, encompassing all towns in between and beyond. In order to provide employers with the best information Health and Safety Works NI will also be in attendance providing key information on Risk Assessments and method statements required to comply with legislation.

The events are also being supported by HMRC and the Equality Commission who will provide additional information sessions on selected dates. Barry Neilson, Chief Executive CITB-ConstructionSkills NI, said, “Our Labour Market Intelligence tells us this is going to be a challenging year but we have invested funds primarily through our grants scheme to help construction employers make the most of the challenges we are facing.

“We are working hard to identify solutions to help employers survive and are keen to help and advise local construction companies whatever way we can and our information events are an informal way of achieving this.”

For further information on these dates, log onto www.citbsni.org.uk or telephone the Training Support Team on 028 9082 5466.

---

**Employer events helping lay foundations for the return to growth**

**Dates for your diary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAN 18</td>
<td>Bank House Hotel, Dungannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN 25</td>
<td>Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN 31</td>
<td>The Terrace Hotel, Church Street, Magherafelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEB 9</td>
<td>The Fir Trees Hotel, Strabane - Equality Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEB 22</td>
<td>Armagh City Hotel, Armagh - HMRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEB 28</td>
<td>Radisson Blu Roe Park Hotel, Limavady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR 7</td>
<td>Belfast Activity Centre, Malone Road, Belfast - Equality Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR 21</td>
<td>Strangford Arms Hotel, Newtownards - Equality Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR 27</td>
<td>Banbridge Enterprise Centre, Scarva Road, Banbridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR 24</td>
<td>Leighlinmohr Hotel, Ballymena - HMRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 2</td>
<td>Cookstown Enterprise Centre, Derryloran Ind Estate, Cookstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 9</td>
<td>Nautilus Centre, Kilkeel - Equality Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY 22</td>
<td>Enterprise Organisation, Enterprise Crescent, Ballinderry Road, Lisburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUN 12</td>
<td>Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen - HMRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUN 20</td>
<td>Corrs Corner Hotel, Newtownabbey - Equality Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUN 27</td>
<td>Tower Hotel, Derry/ Londonderry - HMRC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>