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Spring is on the way and with it an air of optimism that things can only get better, not just on the political front, for the industry still faces many challenges in the months ahead and far beyond, not least a growing skills shortage.

Latest figures from the **Construction Industry Training Board** reveal that almost 225,000 extra workers will be required to meet construction demand across the UK by 2027 – that equates to around 45,000 additional workers a year, which is why recruitment, training, development and upskilling remain major priorities for the industry for 2023 and beyond.

One locally based organisation doing its bit to address the skills shortage is **CITB NI** who have just launched an all female plant operator training pilot scheme at their headquarters in Crumlin in County Antrim. The scheme, which will fully fund the training of 10 female plant operators, came about after it was recognised that there was a high level of interest from females who were willing to get involved in the sector.

On another front, health and safety also remains a priority. Provisional data from the HSA shows that 26 people across Ireland lost their lives in work-related incidents in 2022 compared to 38 in 2021. While that is the lowest figure recorded since the Authority was established over thirty years ago, it is important to point out that there are ongoing investigations that may see the reported/recorded number of fatalities increase. The HSA report shows that falling from height (9 fatalities) and loss of control of a vehicle or its attachments (7 fatalities) were the leading causes of work-related fatalities in the past year.

Meanwhile, we are now entering 'show time' with a number of major exhibitions on the way, including the biggest of them all - CONEXPO-CON/AGG, where all available exhibit space has already been booked, guaranteeing the 2023 edition of the show will be the biggest in history. The show, now nearly 5% bigger than the record set in 2020, will feature 1,800 exhibitors and 175+ education sessions during its run from March 14-18, 2023. We have a full report in this issue on what visitors can expect.

Well, that's it for now, but in the meantime, you can keep up to date with all the industry news 24/7 by logging on to our website at www.plantandcivilengineer.com. Of course, you should also be getting our weekly newsletter which is emailed out every Tuesday; if not, do subscribe on our website so you don't miss out. It's FREE!

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