REPORT

Surveying skills

UK snapshot

November 2026

Introduction

It is a time of significant transformation throughout the built and natural environments. The UK faces major challenges across housing delivery, infrastructure development, planning timetables and climate resilience. At the same time, economic pressures continue to affect investment and development activity.

Surveying professionals work across almost every part of the built and natural environments, and will play a critical role in tackling these concerns. Yet workforce shortages across our industry – and wider – remain a significant challenge.

In 2025, RICS undertook research to better understand skills shortages in surveying. This resulted in the inaugural Surveying skills report and a series of roundtable discussions through the Shaping the Future programme.

Last year's report highlighted the multiple challenges of an ageing workforce, a lack of early career professionals and a changing regulatory environment.

This year, RICS' *Surveying skills report* again underlines the need for a concerted effort to equip both new entrants into the profession and experienced surveyors with the knowledge and tools they need to adjust to a rapidly changing environment.

Skills shortages are already impacting UK organisations

In the UK, 50% of respondents reported that skills shortages were having a critical or moderate impact on their organisations, highlighting the extent of the challenge. Figure 1 shows this breakdown by nation. Of the four nations, respondents from Scotland suggested that current skill shortages were particularly acute.

This may partly be due to universities closing courses in specific disciplines; particular challenges in Scotland's rural and island regions; and certain RICS pathways, such as building control, building surveying and valuation, experiencing severe workforce pressures.

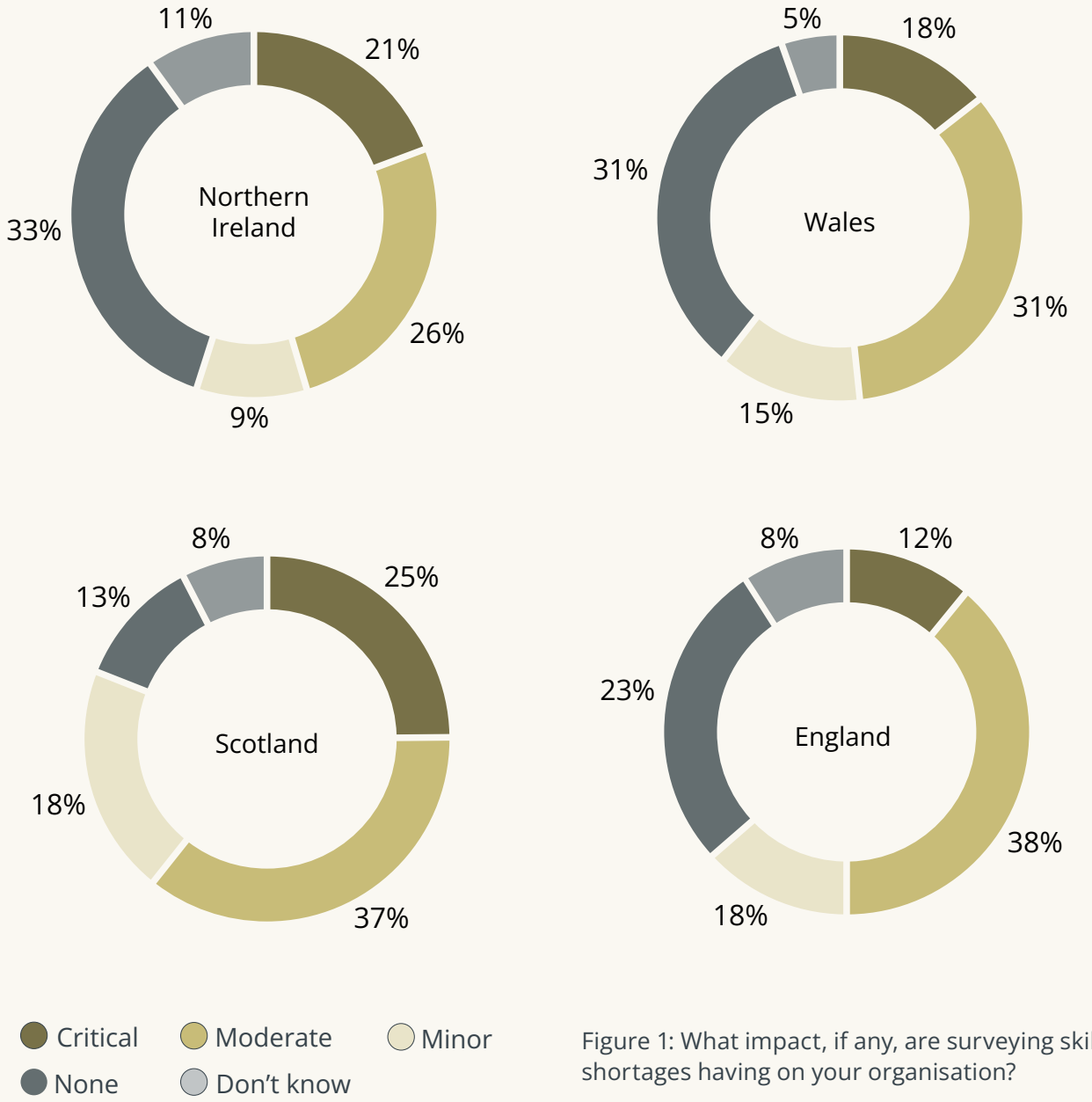


Figure 1: What impact, if any, are surveying skills shortages having on your organisation?

Skills shortages are reducing ability to meet demand and innovate

Respondents were asked in which ways skills shortages are affecting their work, with 63% indicating that skills shortages were reducing capacity to meet demand.

This is notable given that the underlying picture regarding activity is flat at present, and suggests that the sector would struggle to fully respond if there were a material uplift in development to meet the government's ambitions for housing and infrastructure. From the Social and Affordable Homes Programme to the 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy and the New Towns Draft Programme, success will rely on an increase in skilled professionals and capacity.

Not only is the skills shortage impacting the ability of the sector to respond to demand, but it is reducing the resources available for training and upskilling. This creates a self-perpetuating problem for the sector's longer-term ability to close its skills gap.

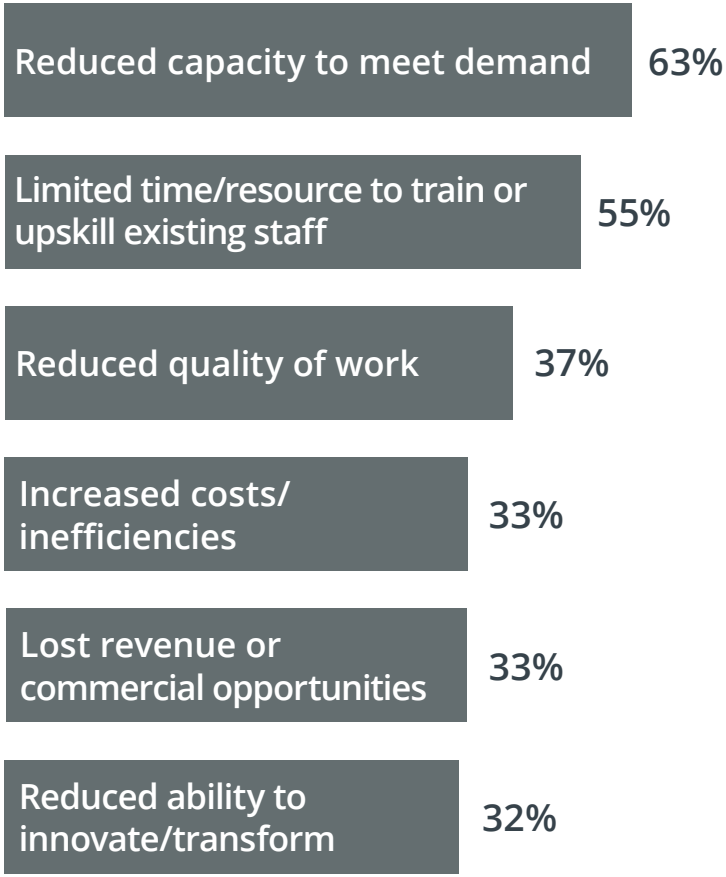


Figure 2: How are skills shortages in the UK affecting your work?

A key concern is the shortage of mid-career and experienced professionals

A particular problem emerging from this year's data is a shortage of mid-career and experienced professionals; almost two-thirds of respondents highlighted that this is the primary driver of skills shortages in their field. This is also echoed by the retention challenges respondents report.

There are also material concerns around a shortage of new entrants and the high retirement rate, reflecting the nature of what is currently an ageing workforce.

The current picture shows that there are pressure points at every stage of the talent pipeline, which will require a combination of strategies to reduce skills shortages.

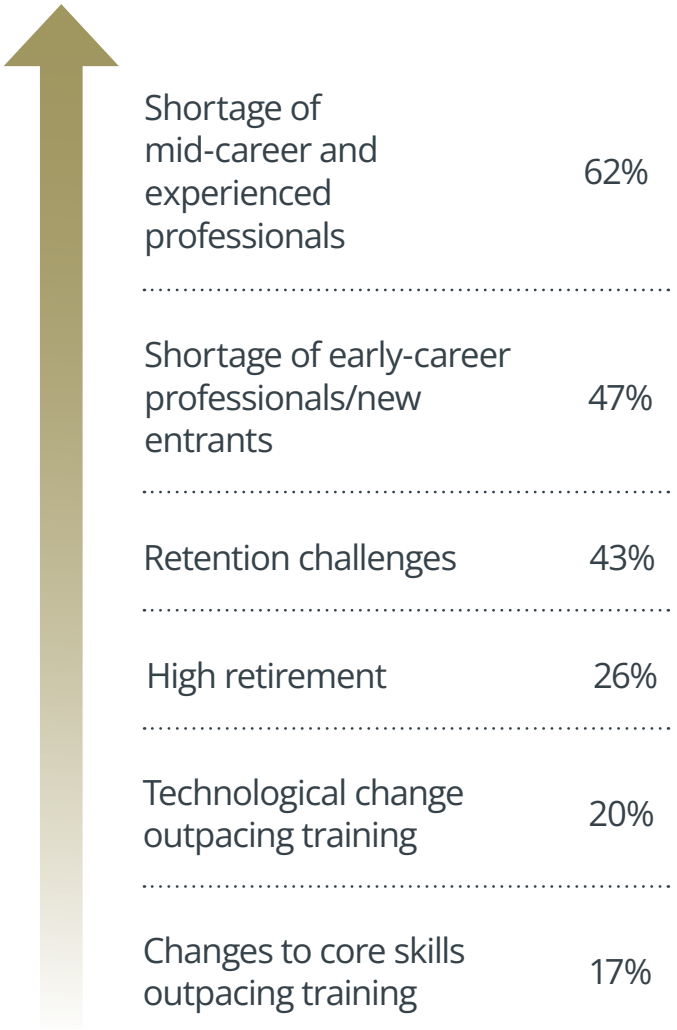


Figure 3: What are the main drivers of UK surveying skills shortages?

Preparing for the future

Against the backdrop of enduring skill shortages, organisations are beginning to think about how they might best address the gap in the coming years. The survey probed this issue in a little more depth, asking respondents to identify the top three approaches being, or likely to be, pursued.

Understandably, organisations are giving considerable attention to how they engage with artificial intelligence, automation and digital tools, and the opportunities that emerging technology provides to boost productivity. However, the results suggest that AI adoption is just one part of what will need to be a holistic approach to prepare for future skills gaps.

The top result – by a wide margin – was upskilling and training current staff. This aligns with concerns about the shortage of mid-career and experienced professionals, as well as retention. It is also an interesting response in the context of the ongoing challenges around resource constraints that were referenced earlier.

Putting in place programmes to ensure surveyors are equipped with the appropriate level of technical knowledge in a fast-changing environment is clearly viewed as being as important as the application of the technology itself.

However, it is evident that this on its own is not going to be sufficient to fully address the issue. As with last year's report, respondents once again point to the importance of attracting new entrants in helping to plug the skills gap.



Upskill and train current staff	42%
Improve retention through improving reward and progression	31%
Adopt AI, automation and digital tools to increase productivity	30%
Improve retention through flexible work and organisational culture	30%
Expand early-career recruitment	21%
Target mid-career entrants/ career switchers from adjacent professions	18%
Recruit specialist talent	14%
Outsource/offshore selected tasks	9%
Recruit internationally (incl. remote hiring)	4%

Figure 4: What are the top three ways that organisations are preparing for future skills shortages or gaps in the UK?

Skills of the future

The survey asked respondents to consider the skills of the future, and specifically which skills will be the most important over the next three to five years.

While 44% of UK respondents ranked data analytics, digital tools and advanced technologies in their top three responses, critical thinking and learning agility, as well as communication, collaboration and stakeholder management, were considered even more important skills for the future.

In a world where surveyors and their clients are increasingly tech-enabled, being able to evaluate, analyse and communicate will become an even more prominent part of the core professional skillset that will be required in the future. This also reflects the recent government commitment to hardwiring public speaking skills into the National Curriculum.

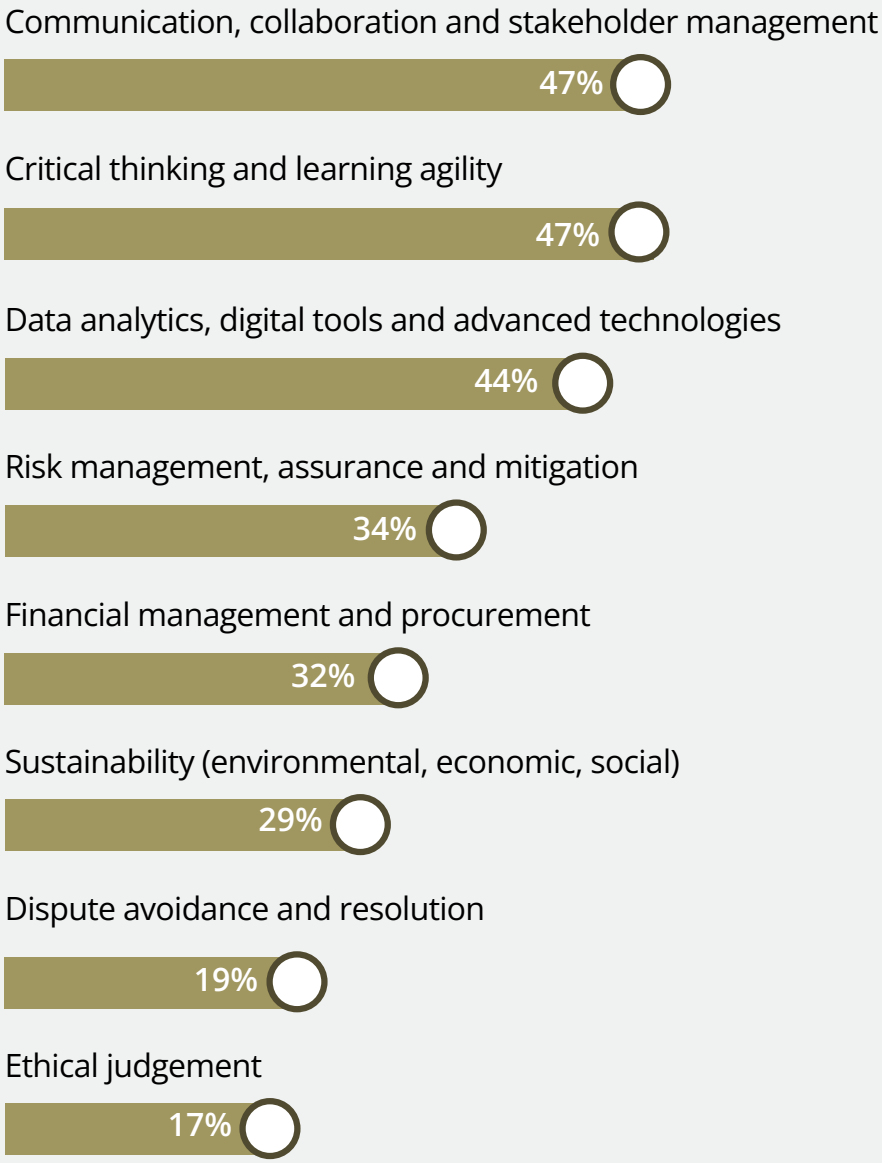


Figure 5: Which of the following skills will be the top three most important over the next 3–5 years in the UK?

The need to help professionals work effectively with AI was demonstrated by the question regarding how well-equipped surveyors feel to utilise these tools.

The lack of preparedness reflects the speed with which the professional environment is changing, and the challenge in finding ways to acquire skills that are becoming necessary in order to practice as a surveyor.



‘Too many universities still tell students to avoid AI rather than teaching them to use it responsibly; we tried the same with computers in the 1980s, and it did not age well. AI must become a core, formally assessed part of surveying education. The profession’s future depends on it.’

James Garner, FRICS, Head of AI and Data, Gleeds

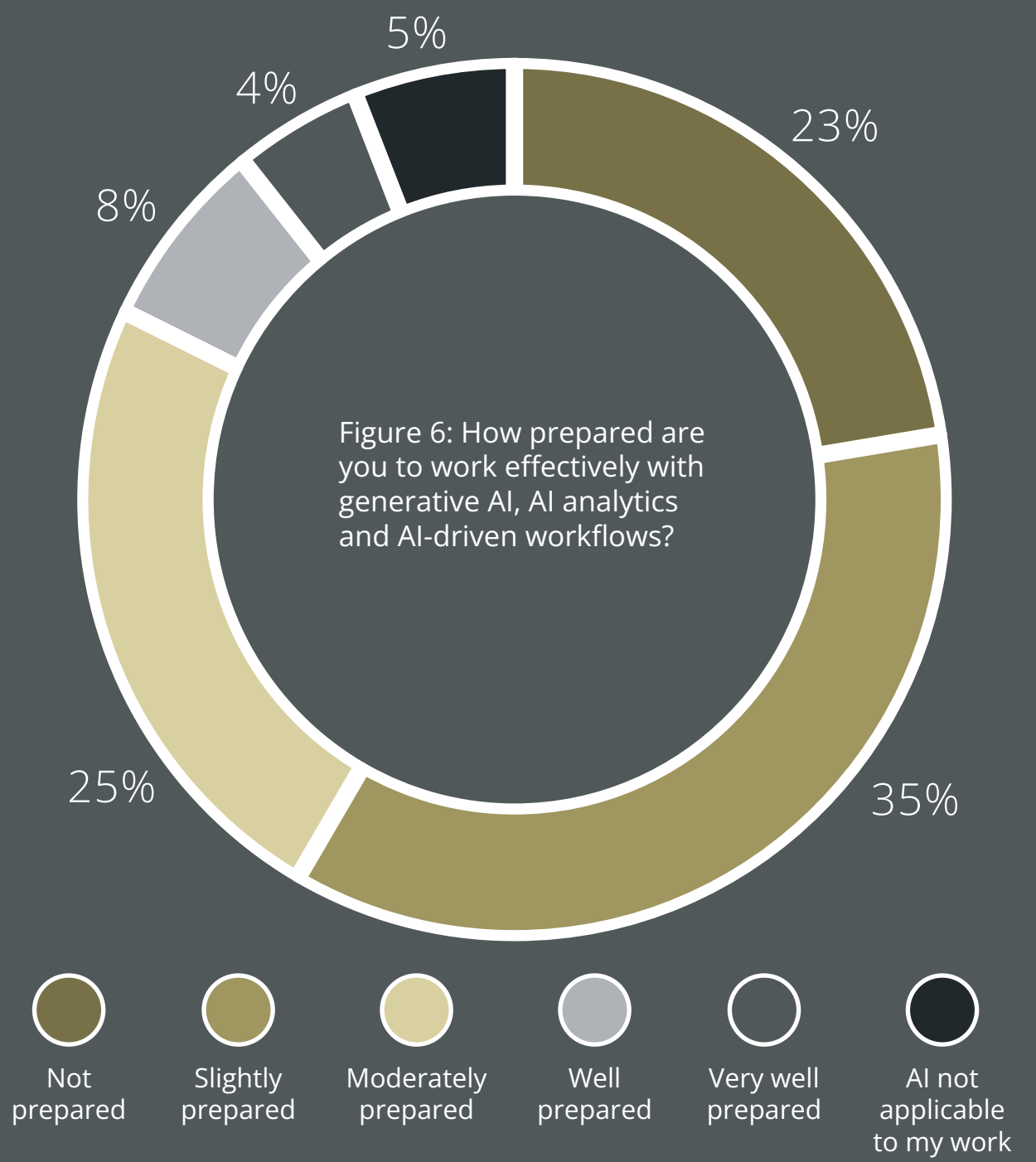


Figure 6: How prepared are you to work effectively with generative AI, AI analytics and AI-driven workflows?



‘As a profession, we cannot address the skills challenge by focusing solely on recruitment. The real opportunity lies in creating sustainable career pathways that attract, develop and retain talent throughout the profession.’

Grace Conisbee MRICS, Managing Director, Melrose Property Consultants Ltd and RICS Matrics UK Board Member

Readying the profession

The findings of the *Surveying skills report* demonstrate that there is a need for the profession to be supported at every stage. Mid-career shortages and concerns around upskilling point to a challenge that will require a holistic approach to solve. RICS is already engaged in several initiatives to support the profession in mitigating skills gaps and shortages.

- Modernising routes to membership through our Qualifications and Professional Development (QPD) programme, which will introduce a modular approach to learning and assessment methodologies. Modular learning aligns with how ongoing professional development is approached by bodies such as Skills England, and will open up new opportunities for professionals with diverse educational or workplace learning experiences to gain membership status in the UK and beyond.
- Introducing new professional pathways in emerging areas, including Sustainability Advisory (MRICS) and Data Analytics and Intelligence (MRICS). This is to ensure that our own pathways align with emerging career paths and specialisms.
- Supporting lifelong learning and upskilling through adapting training, CPD and professional development to emerging trends.
- Promoting surveying careers to the next generation via external outreach and on social channels such as TikTok. RICS works with grassroots organisations to provide young people with skills, experience and early career opportunities via its Inspired to Hired programme, which bridges the gap between industry and grassroots organisations.

Bolstering skills development at all career stages and ensuring appropriate, accessible routes are available into the profession is critical for the wider economy and to enable the government to deliver its ambitious housing and infrastructure agenda.

Ensuring that we have a skills pipeline that sets everyone up for success will require concerted effort and action. No one organisation can or should solve this alone. In the UK, it will require employers, governments, education providers and professional bodies to work together to share knowledge and expertise, and to identify levers for change.

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

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