

CIOB Northern Ireland Assembly Election 2022 Manifesto:
Our Vision for Northern Ireland's built environment



Foreword

The transformation of the built environment in Northern Ireland has continued at a pace over the last number of years, in spite of the various economic, political and social challenges that we have faced. Not only has the local construction sector stepped up to every challenge, it has also exported its talents to Ireland, GB and even further afield.

CIOB is the largest professional body for construction management and locally we provide representation on several platforms such as the Construction Professionals Council NI, the Construction Industry Group and the All-Party Group on Construction. We have a complimentary mixture of staff and active volunteer members all playing their part.

Our members locally work in all sectors of construction, from contractors to consultants, designers to project managers. We strongly believe that amongst the many competing voices to be heard at an election, the views of the built environment profession should be prominent, to highlight both the challenges and the opportunities that our sector faces, and which can in turn have a major impact on wider society.

We have focused on four key areas that we would like our prospective elected representatives to consider.

This includes ensuring that the quality of our buildings are not only of the highest standard, but are also safe to live, work and play in.

We need the skills at all levels to deliver on our plans, and at the current rate even if budgets were available, we have a major shortfall in the people to build our future.

Net Zero is something that we hear about regularly now, and its impact on construction, and construction's impact on net zero is immense.

Procurement of construction services has always been an area where the industry feels things could always be done better. We want our politicians to understand the frustration that current processes can cause.

Finally, as a profession, we want the security of knowing that our elected representatives are concentrated on delivering for the future, as we all need stability.

I encourage all prospective political candidates to engage with the CIOB, and our local membership to make your voices heard.

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Roger Gillespie FCIOB
Chair, CIOB Northern Ireland Hub Committee

Introduction

The quality of our built environment affects every member of society. It influences productivity and well-being at home and at work. It creates and maintains the places where people live, work and play, the infrastructure that supports them, and the services that sustain them.

Much has changed since the last election in Northern Ireland, with the UK formally exiting the European Union and the Covid-19 pandemic affecting almost every aspect of life. At the same time, the climate emergency continues to exacerbate the inequalities that the pandemic has exposed and demands urgent action if we are to secure the future of our planet.

While the pandemic has brought immense difficulty to many, it has also highlighted the strength of Northern Ireland's communities. The construction sector has demonstrated its strengths as it helped to support the economy throughout lockdown. The sector's resilience, flexibility and dedication will be essential as we begin to build back and shape a Northern Ireland that is fit for future generations.

From a policy perspective, the last two years have seen the launch of a Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, a Housing Supply Strategy, a Programme for Government Framework,

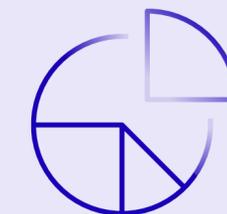
a Climate Change Bill, and a series of reforms to public procurement, all of which directly impact the built environment. The CIOB has contributed to each of these initiatives through consultation responses and direct engagement with public bodies. With this upcoming election, 2022 is the time to drive each of these policy areas forward, and to equip Northern Ireland to deal with the challenges that will face its built environment for the remainder of this decade. It is with this in mind that we are setting out CIOB's vision for the future of Northern Ireland's built environment in this manifesto.

With an impending election, now is to answer important questions about how we plan to improve the quality and sustainability of our buildings, and how we will equip current and future members of the industry with the skills they need to create this change.

Ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections, the CIOB has set out its vision for the future of the built environment in Northern Ireland, developed in close consultation with our members. We stand ready to work with the future Northern Ireland Government to help to improve the quality of life for users and creators of Northern Ireland's built environment.



The construction industry is the **fourth largest employer Northern Ireland**, providing over **50,000 jobs directly**, and supporting many others which are reliant on the industry.



It contributes around **7% of GDP** to the Northern Irish economy.



There are over **10,520 construction businesses**, and almost 95% of them micro-sized (employing 0-9 people).

What we need from the Northern Ireland Government

We are calling for a commitment to adopt a Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill in Northern Ireland, which can be modelled off the **Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015)**. The Act in Wales, which is the first of its kind, has been attracting global attention because it looks to combat the short-termism inherent in modern democracies. Adopting such a Bill in Northern Ireland will ensure that policy is joined up and works for the long-term, particularly when it comes to the built environment.

It is crucial that the Northern Ireland Assembly demonstrates its ability to learn from the Covid-19 crisis, and that it has mechanisms in place to adequately prepare for future pandemics, and other future threats. A Future Generations Bill provides an opportunity to tackle these threats pre-emptively, and to provide more cost-effective solutions to long-standing issues such as climate change.

We are asking parties to commit to a Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill which would aim to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Northern Ireland by ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. By placing a duty on public bodies to set and

meet wellbeing objectives, the Bill would place long-term, sustainable, and preventative thinking at the heart of policymaking.

Given the long-term impact its output has on society, the construction industry needs a policy environment to help it embed the kind of long-term, sustainable and preventative thinking that the Bill proposes.

Our buildings need to be more efficient, use less energy, water and other materials – both during construction and operation – if they are to adapt to cope with the climate change that will take place over the coming decades. Our buildings also need to be updated to match the extraordinary change technology is creating in how we live and work.

Our current environmental trajectory means that future generations are likely to be worse off than current generations. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, many in Northern Ireland are looking to the Assembly for a new vision and the legislative assurances that safeguards the rights of future generations. Now is the time to take a strategic approach across Government, business and local communities to learn lessons from the pandemic to ensure we are better protected against future threats.

The construction industry stands ready to meet its duties to future generations, and to help it achieve these ambitions the CIOB is calling on the future Northern Ireland Government to:

- ✓ **Embed into legislation a requirement for longterm thinking from the Assembly whilst retaining a balanced perspective of long and short-term needs**
- ✓ **Create a stable policy environment for the construction sector with long term strategies for housing and retrofit, a national development plan, and accompanying financial commitments**
- ✓ **Ringfence funding for the development of an A-Level in construction**
- ✓ **Introduce measures in public procurement that require employers to sign-up to sector-led Equality Diversity and Inclusion Charters**
- ✓ **Develop an accelerated and coordinated retrofit education and training programme in colleges, universities, and the private sector, to train construction technicians and professionals in the skills they will need to decarbonise our existing building stock.**

CIOB in Northern Ireland

The CIOB is the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. Our 45,000-strong global membership encompasses decision makers across all built environment disciplines, from planning and design to construction, sustainability and facilities management. We have a Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, and we've been doing that since 1834. Our members work worldwide, and across the island of Ireland in the development, conservation, and improvement of the built environment.

With nearly 1,500 members in Northern Ireland, our members have led some of Northern Ireland's most high-profile projects, including Belfast's iconic Custom House, and Titanic Quarter as well as thousands of smaller commercial and residential schemes in both the public and private sectors.

Supporting careers in construction has been at the heart of the CIOB work in Northern Ireland. We accredit nine university courses in Northern Ireland across several institutions. These courses are unique, working with consortiums of employers and training providers to develop robust content and ensure the qualifications are developed by the sector, for the sector. Our training programmes also offer student membership of the CIOB and are designed for seamless progression to higher level study, ensuring equal opportunities for upward social mobility.

Collaboration is central to our work in Northern Ireland, and we regularly work with the Government, our sister bodies and trade groups to ensure a one voice approach on key issues affecting Northern Ireland. We have worked with the Department of Finance to achieve recognition for CIOB members in public procurement processes, we have collaborated with the Institute of Chartered Engineers and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors on the proposed National Infrastructure Advisory Board for Northern Ireland, and we are currently working with the Northern Ireland Equality Commission to disseminate CIOB's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Charter.

CIOB's policy proposals

1. Quality: the role of policy

An enabling policy environment

The construction industry is the fourth largest employer Northern Ireland, providing over 50,000 jobs directly, and supporting many others which are reliant on the industry. The industry is therefore ideally placed to put Northern Ireland quickly on the path to economic recovery.

Construction and maintenance are key economic drivers. Investment in repair, maintenance and improvement of the existing building stock, as well as the construction of new buildings will be vital to rebuilding the Northern Irish economy, implementing building safety reform, and reaching net zero.

As well as providing a crucial economic boost, investing now in the construction of new hospitals, educational buildings, recreational facilities and affordable, energy efficient housing will create a Northern Irish built environment that leaves a legacy of quality for future generations. This will have far-reaching effects beyond just the economy, and will create positive outcomes for healthcare, living and learning standards across Northern Ireland.

Additional investment in construction will also help to secure stable, long-term employment for existing members of the industry, as well as opening opportunities for the upskilling and training of new entrants. This will support the effective transfer of skills from industries currently undergoing structural change because of the pandemic. Crucially, this additional investment needs to take place within a coherent policy framework that will give a clear signal to the construction sector that there will be a long-term pipeline of future projects.



CIOB Northern Ireland is calling for the next Assembly to create a stable policy environment for the construction sector with long term strategies for housing and retrofit, a national development plan, and accompanying financial commitments.



CIOB's policy proposals

1. Quality: the role of policy

Improving quality in the construction process

Quality, or rather the failure of quality, is arguably the most important issue facing the construction industry today. The CIOB is committed to ensuring that the principles outlined in the UK Government's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety are fully implemented, and we have been active in driving building safety reform at an industry and regulatory level. Our Guide to Quality Management in Construction aims to provide a single point of information on quality management to establish best practice for site production and assembly.

Quality is critical. It is about the greater public good we expect from our buildings to promote human health, safety and well-being as well as addressing today's numerous social, cultural, environmental, and economic concerns. In June 2017, we launched a Construction Quality Commission made up of past CIOB presidents to investigate the issues of quality in the sector and address what needs to be done to improve it.

We continue to actively drive building safety reform, with representation on the UK Government's Industry Safety Steering Group to lead the Building Safety Programme and deliver cultural change in construction industry. Key to improving quality will be an industry-wide shift in culture,

and the future Northern Ireland Government must challenge the industry in Northern Ireland to build better.



We urge the next Assembly to implement the findings of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, to continue to lead on improving existing standards of building safety and quality, and to ensure that funding is made available to adequately support this reform.

The work of the Commission has led to the following:

March 2018 – the launch of the 'Building in Quality' initiative. A free-to-download digital tool to improve the quality of outcomes in the construction industry alongside the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

September 2018 – the launch of a course in Construction Quality Management.

October 2018 – UK Government announcement of a statutory New Homes Ombudsman in the UK following CIOB campaigning.

July 2019 – the publication of a Code of Quality Management to improve standards by providing tools and processes to help in the delivery of quality on construction projects.

October 2019 – the introduction of a freely-available Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in quality in construction.

December 2020 – the publication of research into understanding the capability and capacity of the UK built environment to deliver and retain the 'Golden Thread' of digital information.

January 2021 – a new Guide for Quality Management in Construction for Site Production and Assembly.

CIOB's policy proposals

2. Education, skills and training

Skills shortages affect both the professional and trade sides of the built environment. Prior to the pandemic, the Construction Industry Training Board's Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2018 report found that one in six (17%) construction employers did not have enough skilled workers. Nearly half (47%) of employers had trouble in recruiting skilled direct or self-employed staff.

The Global Financial Crisis had a devastating impact on the construction industry workforce, with some 400,000 people losing their jobs across the sector in the UK, and many never returning. The industry has taken over a decade to rebuild its capacity and the experience serves as a harsh reminder of the threat of recessions pose to the sector.

The Northern Ireland labour market will continue to change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impacts. An estimated 70% of workers were furloughed by construction companies between the period from March to end of June 2020. We welcome the Government's support for the sector during this time, as well as mechanisms to

retain staff through the Talent Retention Scheme, however, we anticipate that employers will opt for redundancies unless workloads return to pre-Covid-19 levels.

Recruitment and training across the built environment are complex challenges, compounded by the ageing profile of workers in the sector, low numbers of new entrants and the proposed changes to immigration laws affecting the ability to recruit.

The Construction Leadership Council's (CLC) Industry Skills Plan identifies several enablers which will be needed to tackle the sector's skills challenge.

These include:

- ✓ **Enhanced work experience**
- ✓ **Industry-education links**
- ✓ **Technical-professional progression**
- ✓ **Modern qualifications that meet future needs**
- ✓ **Net zero skills**
- ✓ **Digitisation**



CIOB's policy proposals

2. Education, skills and training

There is currently a GCSE in Construction which is offered across over 30 schools. Unfortunately, there is no A-Level in Construction. A-level subjects provide a clear path to university degree programmes and are recognised throughout Ireland. When a student (and their parents) is selecting their A Levels they tend to opt for the known and trusted A Level subjects listed by The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment .

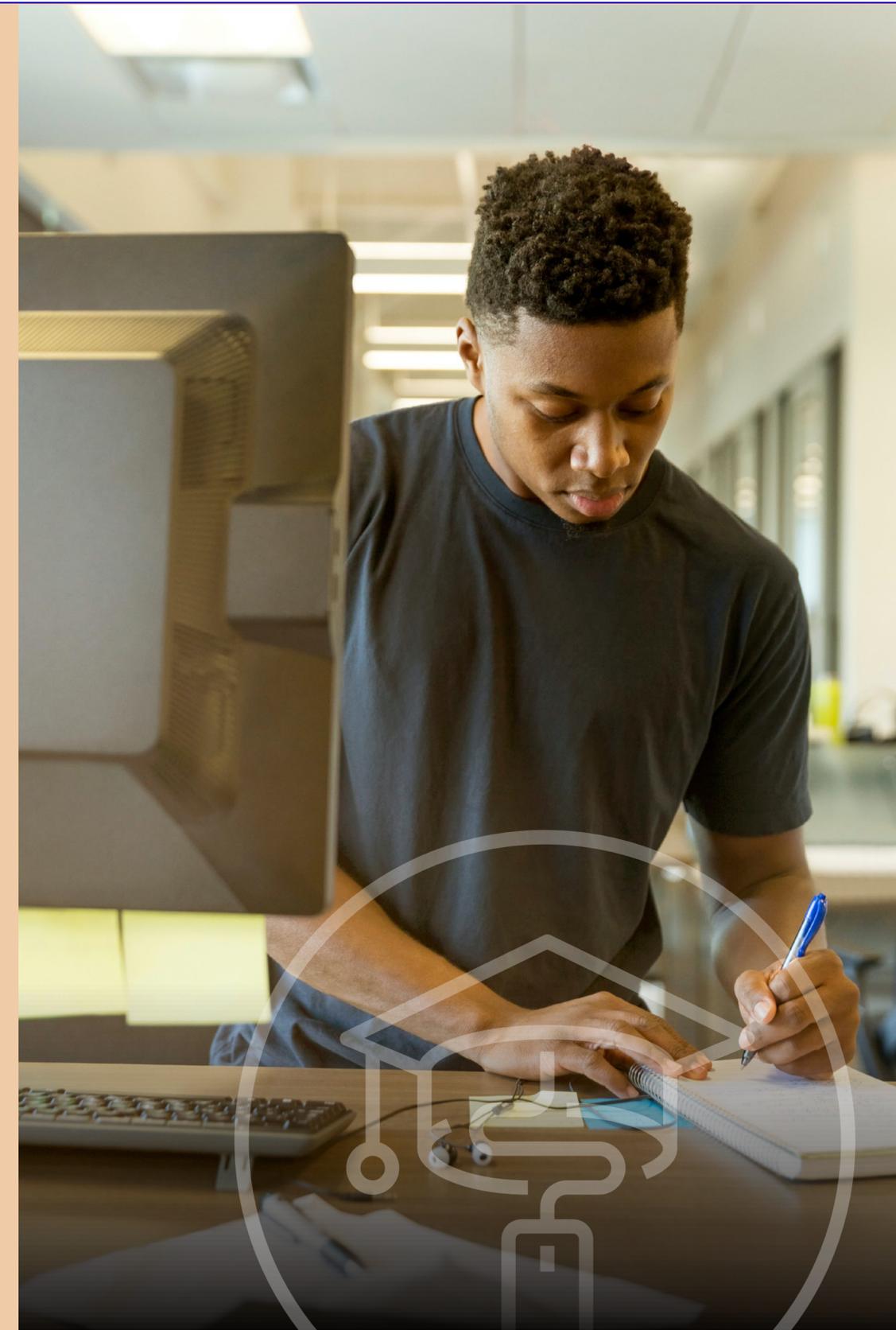
Construction has historically struggled to get promoted at schools by careers advisors, it is still perceived to be a trades qualification rather than a professional management career. An A Level would be beneficial in numerous ways including:

- Encouraging women into the industry, addressing the gender imbalance, and contributing towards Northern Ireland's STEM agenda
- Promoting construction careers within schools creates parity of esteem with other subjects and career opportunities at this key stage in a young person's life

- With the right design and marketing information for careers advisors it would target the critical age of career decision making for students and parents
- Providing a clear pathway to undergraduate programmes in construction and the wider built environment throughout Ireland
- Articulating directly to the Higher-Level Apprenticeship in Construction for which CIOB accredited Ulster University has recently received approval by the Department for Education for an intake of 10 students



We are calling on the next Assembly to ringfence funding for the development of an A-Level in construction.



CIOB's policy proposals

3. Net Zero

Awareness of the urgent need to tackle the climate emergency is growing, and delaying action is not an option. With targets being set for 20-to-30-years' time, difficult decisions must be taken before it is too late for future Northern Irish Governments to deliver impactful action. Having had a strong presence from Local Authorities at COP 26, and with the recent passing of the country's first Climate Change Bill, now is the time to capitalise on Northern Ireland's potential to embrace a greener built environment.

As a member of the All-Party Group on Climate Change interfacing with the Northern Ireland Assembly, the CIOB is actively advising on the decarbonisation of Northern Ireland's built environment. The CIOB has previously called on the UK Government to implement the Construction Leadership Council's National Retrofit Strategy, which will provide a long-term policy framework that will help the industry to scale up systematically to meet the volume of work required to retrofit the existing housing stock.

At least 70% of the buildings currently standing will be here in 2050, and with a current housing stock of around 814,210 homes, the energy performance of Northern Ireland's existing homes must be improved if emissions reductions targets are to be achieved. Private housing Repair Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) is a major sector for construction, accounting for more than 20% of industry activity in Northern Ireland in 2020. Private housing RMI was also one of the major growth areas during the pandemic period, with a quarterly increase of 31% between Q2 and Q3 2020. In 2016 Northern Ireland's housing stock had 61,000 dwellings deemed below the Decent Homes Standard, 160,000 dwellings in fuel poverty, and 50% of dwellings were rated below the EPC target Band C.

If the ambitious retrofit targets outlined in Northern Ireland's 'The Path to Net Zero' energy strategy are to be met, the Assembly will need to ensure that we have enough qualified individuals who can specify, design, install, manage, and maintain this work. At the same time, it is vital to educate the users on the correct use of the retrofit solutions if we are all to benefit from this massive remit.



We recommend that the next Assembly develop an accelerated and coordinated retrofit education and training programme in colleges, universities, and the private sector, to train construction technicians and professionals in the skills they will need to decarbonise our existing building stock.

The construction industry is already well equipped to measure embodied carbon both in buildings and what is used across the wider supply chain. To carbon monitoring, we believe there is a significant opportunity for the next Assembly to work with the sector to introduce a clear metric and target for carbon reduction on construction and infrastructure projects. As the largest employer in Northern Ireland, the public sector is in an ideal position to lead the way.



We recommend that the next Assembly, the 160 public bodies in Northern Ireland, those they fund and their sub-groups, implement a carbon metric, in their feasibility, planning delivery and operation of its own built environment.

CIOB's policy proposals

4. Procurement

Public procurement is an important element of the economy in Northern Ireland, with central and local Government spending upwards of £3 billion annually on the purchase of supplies, services and construction works. This level of expenditure offers real potential in terms of maximising the economic and social outcomes for the local community.

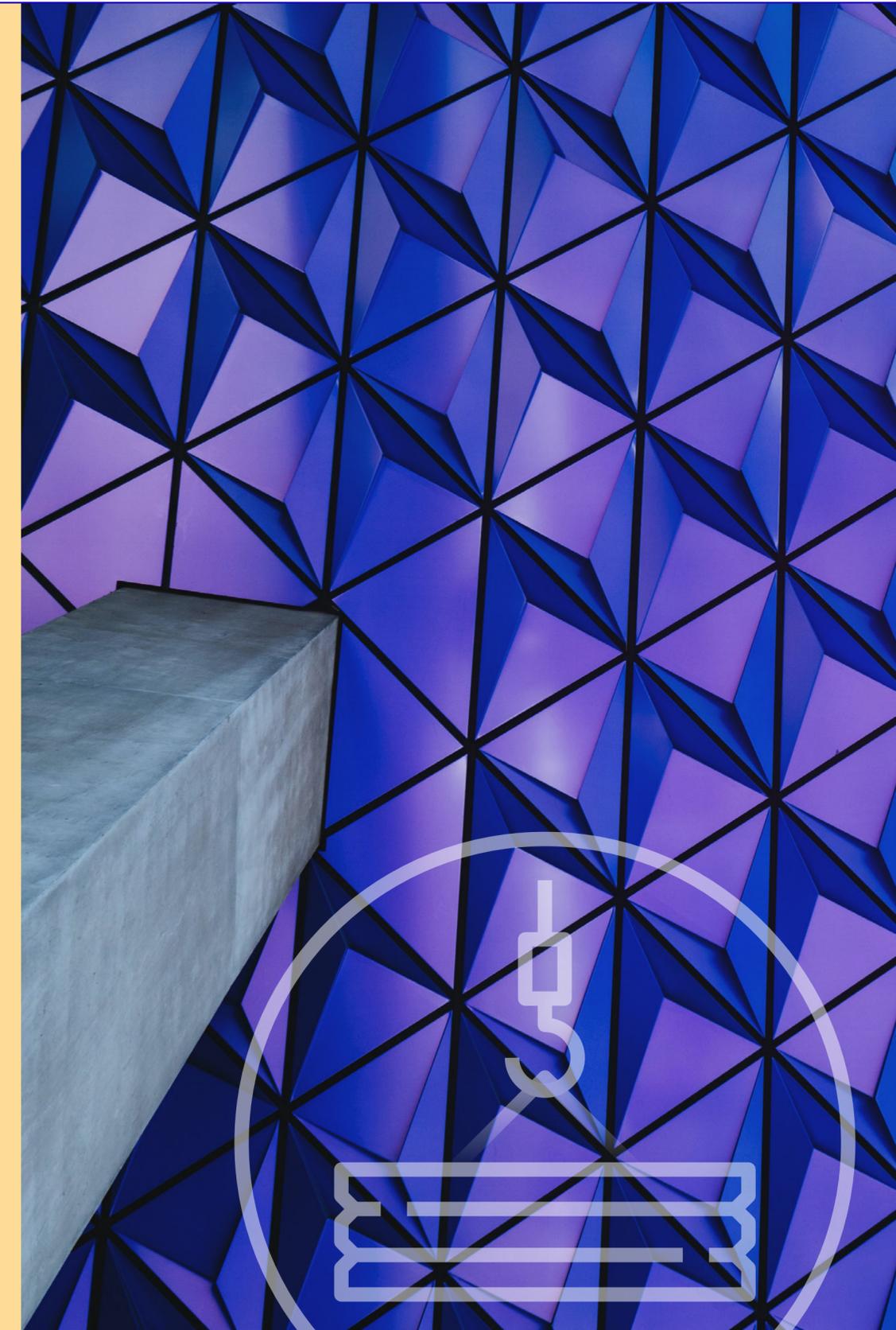
Procurement offers the opportunity for public bodies to actively add value to the wider national interest. With that in mind the CIOB welcomes the new Northern Ireland policy requiring scoring of social value in public procurement.

The CIOB has produced a **Diversity and Inclusion in Construction charter** for competitive advantage and enhanced employee belonging. Outlining five steps businesses can undertake to becoming a more diverse and inclusive employer. The steps include showing leadership, making a plan, shaping a culture, being transparent and being accountable. CIOB believes that having resources like the charter can be an asset for industries like construction where they can commit to the charter and start on their journey to gather data to understand their workforce, identify gaps in

their policies and become more accountable and transparent on their progress.



To make it a business priority to implement policies across all under-represented groups, the next Assembly should introduce measures in public procurement that require employers to sign-up to sector-led Equality Diversity and Inclusion Charters.



How you can be involved

For candidates in the 2022 election



Speak to CIOB members about how construction is making a difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland



Engage with us and let us know your thoughts on our priority areas by email policy@ciob.org.uk or via tweet [@theCIOB](https://twitter.com/theCIOB)



Show your support and speak to your constituents about our key asks to highlight how you can support the construction sector.

For construction industry professionals



Use our online tool to write to your local candidates, to set out your vision for the construction sector in Northern Ireland.

[Campaign page ▶](#)



Sign up for the monthly CIOB Ireland policy bulletin which will cover the results of the NI Assembly elections.

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