

estimated that an additional 400,000 workers will be required by the end of this decade to achieve NET Zero targets.

We are tackling this challenge already within the engineering construction industry. The ECIA surveyed its members and the results indicate that a 50% increase in the numbers of trade staff will be required in 2024; it is estimated that numbers of certain trades, such as Welders, will need to double by Q3 of 2024!

We are seeing a gap between the older generation within the industry, many who are at end of career, and a younger generation, who we find are more likely to move between employers regularly. It is a bit of a generalisation; however, we see a shortfall in the age grouping between 35 & 50 who have built up experience and have appetite and desire to continue their work in the industry over the next 10 to 15 years. As a result, there is real difficulty with recruitment; we are competing with competitors, other clients, projects and industries for the available resource.



So, what do we do about it? Well, we see the only option being to continue doing what we have always done (bring in apprentices and trainees, invest & develop, and ensure the working environment provides security & opportunity for long term employment & progression), but at an accelerated rate.

We are taking an increased number of trainees from the Engineering College in Birkenhead, who are doing great



work in preparing future trades for the industry. We are moving keen apprentices through college, workshop, onto site and up to craftsman status. Separately, we explored and took up alternative routes such as the ECITB's "Train to Retain" & "Upskilling" programmes which provide routes to trade from less traditional routes.

To keep pace with the increased numbers of trainees, we incentivised older trade staff to stay involved as trade mentors to help accelerate the progress of apprentices and provided opportunity for progression from within the business, with continued training & development leading to a large proportion of promoted engineers, supervisors & managers starting as Laker Vent trainees.

There is still significant amounts of work to do to keep pace with opportunity and this will involve continuing the good work we are doing, but exploring less conventional ways of getting people into the industry; things like reaching out to groups that would not be seen as traditionally entering the

industry in a trade capacity (eg. 321,000 women in construction in UK, but only 6,240 at site as trade person), provide alternative entry routes not restricted by age or experience (eg. ex-service men & women), incentives for older, experienced trade mentors to stay in the industry (incentives for the individual & the employer), and provide the right working environment and employment benefits to attract & retain staff within the industry.

We do not see this as an easy ride, but look forward to the exciting journey.

Tom Ventre, Operations Director, Laker Vent Engineering.
For further details visit <https://lakervent.co.uk/>

