

TRADITIONAL BUILDING SKILLS AUDIT

Dumfries and Galloway



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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Dumfries
& Galloway



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INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to collate and analyse the results of an audit of the building contractors in the region who are skilled in the repair and maintenance of the traditional building stock. It is intended that the results gathered will give Dumfries and Galloway Council an accurate picture of which traditional building skills are represented in the region, to what degree and which are lacking.

Following a tendering process Savills Architecture & Building Surveying (ABS), Dumfries Team were appointed by the Council to undertake this Traditional Building Skills Audit.

The findings of this report and subsequent recommendations made are intended to inform the Council's future strategy for regeneration, starting with the current Dumfries CARS (as of mid-2023) and strategy and project work further to that.

This report covers the context, approach and results of the audit, gives a detailed analysis of the results found and makes appropriate recommendations.



CONTEXT

Dumfries and Galloway Council have previously led a number of Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) and other heritage-led regeneration schemes across the region, funded and promoted by Historic Environment Scotland (HES), DGC and other funders. As of mid-2023, DGC are currently leading on CARS in Stranraer and Dumfries. Part of the remit of the CARS is to understand and promote traditional building skills within the area, hence the undertaking of this Audit. Further to this, HES have made it a requirement for grant funded schemes going forward that a skills audit is produced for development phase funding. It is therefore desirable to have such a document available for the purposes of future grant applications.

Savills have been working on traditionally constructed and historic buildings across Dumfries and Galloway for over thirty years. Consequently they are aware of the issues of finding suitably experienced contractors able to work on these types of buildings and deliver the appropriate quality and standard of work required for traditionally constructed buildings.

Many buildings in Dumfries and Galloway are of traditional construction, with most dating from the 19th Century. These buildings are not restricted to the towns. Many fine farm complexes, churches and other historic houses using this type of construction are located in the rural areas of the region.

Traditional buildings in Scotland are generally considered to be constructed from stone, lime mortar, timber and slate and being of 'breathable construction'.

These buildings were typically built before 1919 when modern materials and techniques were generally adopted in the construction industry. Traditional methods of construction include the full range of trades relating to the fabric of a building with masonry, joinery and roofing being key trades.

The use of lime in masonry, the accurate replication of mouldings in joinery, the detailing of lead and the coursing of slates in roofing are examples of where many contractors are often lacking in detailed knowledge and experience. A general lack of understanding of how traditionally constructed buildings function often causes these contractors to use inappropriate modern techniques and materials to address repairs and related work found with these buildings, which will inevitably cause moisture ingress issues, damage to the historic fabric of the building, loss of historic features or other avoidable problems. A particular issue with the use of modern materials and techniques on traditional buildings is that ventilation and moisture management systems will generally be compromised, leading to issues such as damp, mould and dry rot.

Prior to the outset of the audit, it was assumed that the skills base for the repair and maintenance of the traditional building stock would be lacking. This observation was based on the generally poor condition of the historic building stock, the proliferation of modern material interventions in traditional buildings and experience of the difficulty in procuring suitably skilled contractors across the region.



APPROACH

Savills, working closely with the DGC CARS officers, saw the undertaking of this audit as a collaborative process with the key outcome being understanding of the skills base and, by extension, skills gap for traditional building skills in the Dumfries and Galloway region. The data gained from this audit will inform the Council's strategy for the introduction of a region-wide programme for traditional building skills training with the aims of:

- Reintroduction of traditional methods of maintenance and repair of the historic building stock in order to regenerate the region's historic town centres through the sensitive repair and reuse of derelict, disused and under-used buildings.
- Reduction of the use of carbon-intensive, historically insensitive and physically detrimental materials such as uPVC and cement-based products.
- Creation of a regional skills base.
- Creation of jobs in the historic environment sector.

Broadly the approach was to decide on the methodology and how the above objectives could be achieved once the audit is complete. At the outset it was decided to concentrate on key areas so that the data gathered focussed on the core skills. It is proposed that a further audit could be carried out when and if the skills base is brought up to an acceptable level in order to find out about more specialist skills.

It was felt that the three most important trades to look at, relevant to the majority of traditionally built buildings in Dumfries and Galloway, were:

- masonry (specifically working with lime mortar and stone carving)
- roofing (specifically slating and leadwork)
- joinery (specifically sash and case window detailing and decorative mouldings).



Below is the framework that Savills followed for the audit following initial discussion within the team:

- Confirmation of the various skills to be included in the audit.
- Desk based activity to identify contractors who offer the various skills. This was supplemented by engaging with Dumfries and Galloway College, local knowledge and the Trusted Traders Scheme.
- Evolution of a simple questionnaire (see appendix) with questions to help determine, as accurately as possible, the level of skills and experience a contractor has as well as any relevant training they may have undertaken.
- Generation of an introduction to the audit to explain to participants the purpose of the audit and the potential benefit to them by being involved.

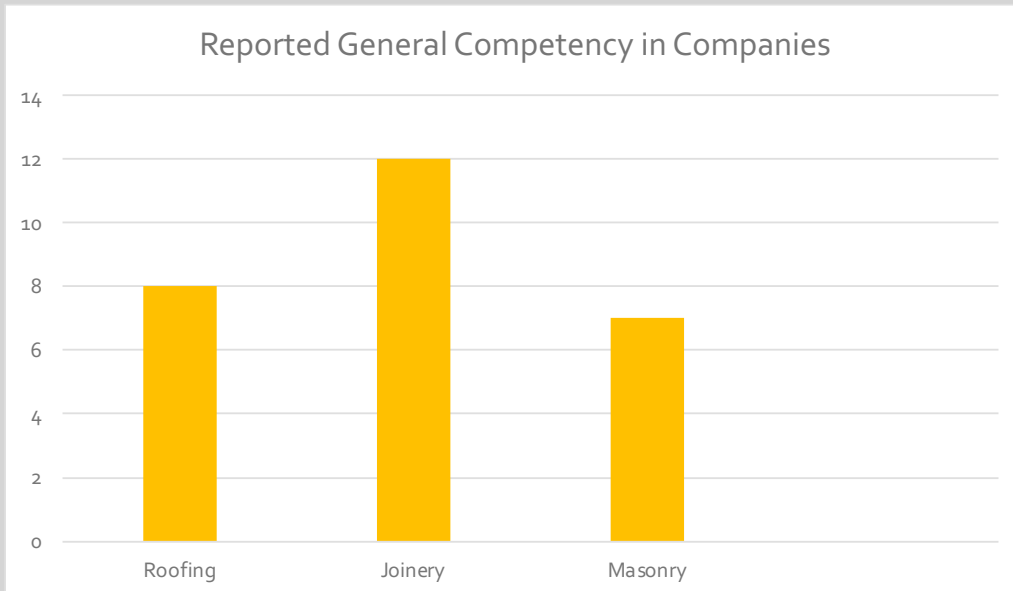
- Initial email to participants followed up by a telephone call and repeat calls (if required) to obtain answers to questionnaire. The process of obtaining responses proved very difficult and time consuming.
- Compilation of a basic database to include names/trades/contact details.

Basic assessment of the results to confirm the most appropriate way forward to achieve the various objectives. HES are currently circulating a questionnaire to stonemasons and stonemasonry firms around Scotland in an attempt to audit the skills base for that trade nationwide. As such, this document was used as the basis for the questionnaire for this audit, given it would help identify information that HES are focussed on for audit purposes.



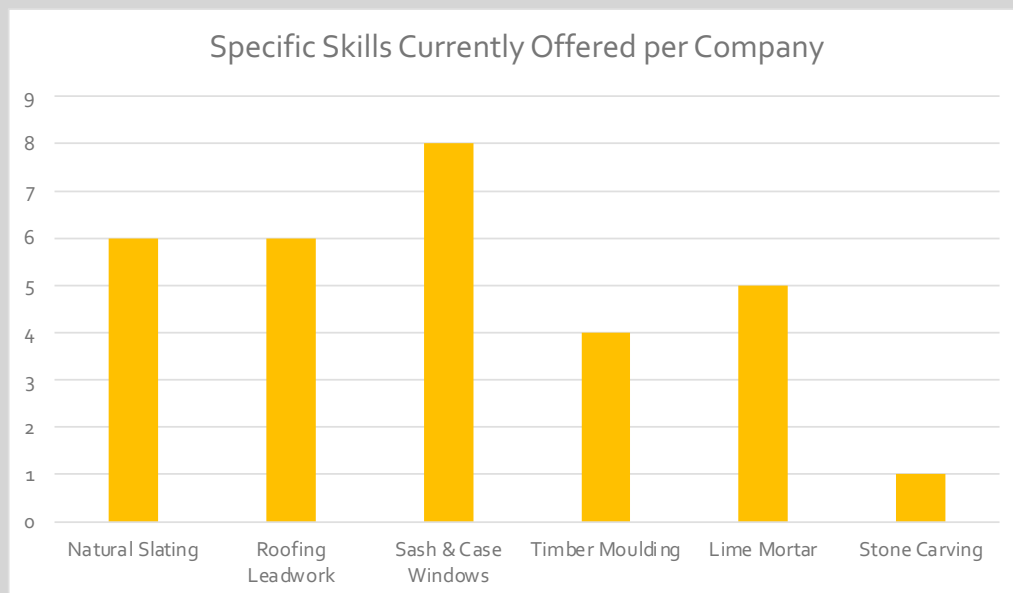
KEY POINTS

90 contracting firms were contacted. Of these, 21 responded which represents 23% of the total.



Of the contractors who replied:

- only 8 felt that they were competent in traditional roofing skills
- 12 in traditional joinery skills
- 7 in traditional masonry skills



Of those contracting firms who replied only:

- 6 in the use of natural slating
- 6 in roofing leadwork
- 8 in sash and case window repair and manufacture
- 4 in timber moulding work
- 5 were competent in the use of lime mortar
- 1 in stone carving



Ultimately it is difficult to say whether this report gives an accurate representation of the region's traditional skills base, given the very poor return rate of the survey and the difficulties encountered in even obtaining details for some contractors. Given that the survey was carried out by a local architecture firm who know the contractors in the region, assisted by two experienced Council Officers, it would seem that obtaining these skills as a non-expert would be a very difficult task. Experience shows that the use of inappropriate materials and techniques to repair traditional buildings is widespread across the region.

It would certainly appear that the skills base in the region is severely lacking given even a basic analysis of the reported data. Although the most available skill appears to be in the repair and manufacture of sash and case windows, this skill is also the one which most companies felt they lacked. It

is unclear whether this is due to a demand for that particular skill or if a recognition that traditional buildings should be cared for properly is emerging. It is also interesting to note that although stone carving is the most under-represented skill, it is also the one that most contractors reported that they did not lack. This could point to a majority of companies subcontracting their stonemasonry jobs to specialist firms or a lack of demand for this skill.

A positive from the audit questionnaire is that, broadly speaking, most contractors were of the opinion that although even basic training facilities in the region are practically absent, training of apprentices and existing employees is an important factor and most would welcome some sort of training offering.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS



GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD

As can be seen from the map above there is a higher concentration of participants in the east of the region which reflects the fact that most economic activity occurs in this area where the population is larger and links to the rest of the country are better.



CONTRACTOR TYPE

Based on the responses it would appear that the contractors who participated were those who, to a large extent, were already specialising in conservation work. It is assumed that those contractors who didn't respond are more likely to be those working with modern construction techniques. If this is the case the 23% response rate may also, approximately, reflect the number of contractors experienced in conservation. Across Scotland the percentage of traditionally constructed buildings is probably significantly higher than 23% (traditionally built housing, on its own, accounts for around 19% at least). It should also be noted that although 90 contractors of various types were identified in the region, it is thought that many more than that number are active in Dumfries and Galloway but do not advertise and work with an existing client base only. Given that it is impossible to identify these contractors, whatever skills they specialise in cannot be quantified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These key recommendations are based on the results of the audit:

- Identify all of the organisations and stakeholders with an interest in historic building skills across the region.
- Examine the providers of traditional building skills training nationwide in order to analyse what is offered elsewhere and what models might be suitable for use in D&G.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a regional training centre for traditional skills.
- Find funding, in partnership with the Council and other relevant funding bodies, to establish a preservation trust-type organisation which will take ownership of problem buildings via back-to-back Compulsory Purchase Order or other means. This organisation could work in tandem with a training centre.
- Develop a set of Traditional Building Skills units/modules which could be an option in Dumfries and Galloway College's Construction Skills programme or run at a possible dedicated training centre.
- Develop a set of Traditional Building Skills webinars to support contractors, building professionals and home owners to raise awareness of the specific needs of traditional buildings.
- Develop an accreditation scheme for contractors interested in providing Traditional Building Skills or retrofitting insulation, together with a database to help traditional building owners identify appropriate contractors.
- Identify funding opportunities for promoting and supporting Traditional Building Skills.
- Consider setting up a Traditional Building Skills Forum and website to enable discussion and review - Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) have a historic environment section on their website which might act as a vehicle: Scotland's Historic Environment - Built Environment Forum Scotland (bef.s.org.uk)
- Ensure that information collected through the Audit is shared with other organisations across Scotland as the lack of traditional building skills is a national one.



CONCLUSION

The response rate to the Audit has been disappointing but at 23% still helps provide a picture of the present situation within Dumfries and Galloway. It is perhaps not unexpected that such a low rate of returns was encountered, as it was expected that the finding would be that there is not a large number of contractors in the region who are competent in traditional building skills. It is therefore expected that the majority of those who did not respond are either not capable or not interested in traditional skills. The challenge going forward will be to educate contractors, building professionals and building owners so that ignorance of traditional building skills will be minimised for most contractors and professionals.

The reason for undertaking the Audit was the concern that traditional building skills capacity was inadequate within the

region bearing in mind the number of traditional buildings there are. The Audit broadly confirms the situation and the data gathered should be sufficient to allow an understanding of where the deficits in the skills base are. It would seem that this skills base is insufficient across the identified range of core skills and as such, a priority should be made of addressing this issue, both in terms of training apprentices and contractors and education programmes for building owners and professionals.

There are some specialist providers of training for traditional building skills in Scotland, notably The Lime Centre (Fife), The Engine Shed (Stirling) and The Ridge (Dunbar). There are also various providers of CPD style day course-based training. It should be noted that both the Whithorn Trust and the Crichton Trust are currently working on traditional skills training projects in one form or another in the region, so making contact with these

organisations along with Dumfries and Galloway College will be a key next step.

It will be important not to overlook the training of existing professionals and craftspeople as well as apprentices to various crafts. It can only be assumed that given the level of response to the questionnaire, the majority of contractors working in the region do not have either the necessary skills to work competently on the historic building stock or do not have interest in gaining these skills. Given the prevalence of modern materials used to repair or maintain traditional buildings in the region, particularly the use of cementitious mortars and uPVC. It would seem that some sort of awareness campaign should be a priority and an accreditation scheme introduced.

It should go without saying that this should be approached in different ways depending on the buildings' construction type. However, given that widespread use of inappropriate and damaging modern materials is prevalent in the repair and maintenance of traditionally constructed buildings, it is likely that the 'one size fits all' approach will, in many cases, be used in the retrofitting process for traditional buildings. Many of the methods of insulating cavity walls could be detrimental to the condition of solid mass masonry buildings. Methods such as spray insulation, insulation boards attached directly to walls and the idea of making buildings 'air tight' so that air source heat pumps can function properly are all at odds with appropriate care of a traditional building. Using such methods is likely to cause moisture movement and ingress problems in traditionally constructed buildings which will eventually lead to damp. It is vital that contractors who are promoting these schemes are trained in the proper installation of these systems according to the building type.

Although awareness initiatives for building owners will be an important step, engagement and training for existing contractors and young people going into the trades will be key. It is not unreasonable for a building owner to expect that a contractor will understand the maintenance and repair needs of their building if they agree to work on it, regardless of the owners' own knowledge of how their building functions. Until it is widely understood that modern methods and materials are not generally compatible with the care of traditional buildings, it is unlikely that building owners will be able to find general contractors capable of working on their buildings outside of specialist craftspeople. As the cost of building works is always going to be a major factor in a building owners' selection of contractors, specialist craftspeople will often be discounted for a cheaper option, even where they would be the most suitable for that job.

It has become clear in compiling of this report that to think of those contractors who can use materials such as lime mortar as 'specialists' is not particularly helpful. A knowledge of how to use traditional materials and methods is essential when working on traditionally constructed buildings and, given how many buildings in D&G and Scotland are of traditional construction, this knowledge should be considered standard in the construction industry. A clear strategy for the reintroduction of this type of work as a standard for working on the historic building stock in the region is a priority that needs to be addressed immediately.

APPENDIX I - QUESTIONNAIRE

Traditional Building Skills Audit for Dumfries and Galloway Council

INTRODUCTION

Over 20% of homes in Scotland are of traditional construction (dating from pre-1919). In addition to these there are also a lot of buildings in other uses which are also traditionally constructed and in many cases they are historic and listed.

The towns of Dumfries and Galloway see a concentration of historic buildings and Conservation Areas have been created to help preserve their historic character and visual appearance which helps the economic performance of these centres.

The building skills required for the repair and maintenance of older buildings can be lacking and inappropriate methods are often employed to the detriment of these buildings.

Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) is running Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) in Stranraer and Dumfries with the objective of restoring a number of key historical buildings in the towns. The Schemes are promoted and partly funded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and DGC. Part of the funding for the schemes is allocated to an audit to understand the extent of traditional building skills available in the region. The questionnaire below has been developed to take the audit forwards.

The Traditional Building Skills Audit is being undertaken by Savills on behalf of DGC and is looking specifically at the trades of Masonry, Roofing, Joinery and the traditional skills associated with these trades that you may have in your business.

Specifically we wish to understand if you employ people who have been trained in:

Masonry –use of lime mortars and stone carving

Roofing – traditional laying of natural slate and leadwork

Joinery – making traditional sash/case windows and replication of traditional mouldings

The anonymous findings of this Traditional Skills Audit will be shared with HES to support strategic planning, programme development and delivery.

The local training regime this audit is trying to generate may be of benefit to you or your company and help you, in the longer term, to upskill your workforce. Therefore please let us know (in question 14a/14b) if your contact details can be retained by DGC so you can be notified of any future training opportunities/accreditation schemes that may arise.

We hope your input will help provide some answers to the issues mentioned above and included in the questionnaire below. This will greatly help address the apparent deficiencies in the present level of training in these skills as well as create greater awareness of the specific needs of traditional buildings/structures when it comes to their repair and maintenance.

We have tried to keep the questionnaire simple to answer, keeping the questions where an opinion is requested to a minimum.

Where relevant answer Y, N or N/a.

When asked for an opinion please keep your answer brief.

Many thanks for participating.

Company Information	
1	What is the size of your business/company based on number of employees?
1a	Sole Trader
1b	Micro (0-9)
1c	Small (10-49)
1d	Medium (50-249)
1e	Large (250+)
2	Do you act as a?
2a	lead contractor?
2b	sub-contractor?

Workforce & Skills	
3	If you employ people trained in the following building skills please indicate number?
3a	Masonry – use of lime mortar
3b	Masonry – traditional stone carving
3c	Roofing – traditional laying of natural slates
3d	Roofing – traditional lead work
3e	Joinery – making traditional sash/case windows
3f	Joinery – replication of traditional mouldings
4	Which of the skills below are you finding most difficult to source?
4a	Masonry – use of lime mortar
4b	Masonry – traditional stone carving
4c	Roofing – traditional laying of natural slates
4d	Roofing – traditional lead work
4e	Joinery – making traditional sash/case windows
4f	Joinery – replication of traditional mouldings
5.	Which of the following reasons are you finding these skills difficult to source?
5a	People not trained in relevant skill
5b	No interest in working on traditional buildings
5c	Please indicate any other reason?
6.	Which skills below do you feel you could do with in your workforce?
6a	Masonry – use of lime mortar
6b	Masonry – traditional stone carving
6c	Roofing – traditional laying of natural slates
6d	Roofing – traditional lead work
6e	Joinery – making traditional sash/case windows
4f	Joinery – replication of traditional mouldings

7.	Which skills below are you finding difficult to obtain training for?	
7a	Masonry – use of lime mortar	
7b	Masonry – traditional stone carving	
7c	Roofing – traditional laying of natural slates	
7d	Roofing – traditional lead work	
7e	Joinery – making traditional sash/case windows	
7f	Joinery – replication of traditional mouldings	
8	With regard to your workforce:	
8a	Roughly what percentage do you expect will retire over the next 5 years?	
8b	What percentage are under the age of 30?	
8c	Are you likely to recruit an apprentice over the next 2 years?	
8d	Are you more likely to recruit an apprentice who has done pre-apprenticeship training?	
8e	If the answer to 8c/8d is 'no' (to either or both) please could you give a reason?	
9	If you have or have taken on apprentices in the past, where did they come from?	
9a	School/ Further Education	
9b	Word of mouth	
9c	Advertising	
9d	Social Media	
9e	Other (please specify)	

Your Work & Contracts

10	In respect of your work:	
10a	What percentage of your work involves working on historic buildings/structures?	
10b	In the last 3 years have you thermally upgraded/retrofitted an historic building/structure?	
11	How confident are you in work availability in your area over the next 2-3 years?	
11a	Strongly confident	
11b	Reasonably confident	
11c	Not confident	
11d	Can you please provide reasons for your views on this?	

12	If you are currently undertaking work to historic buildings and structures:	
12a	Do you expect a change in the amount over the next 5-10 years	
12b	If yes, can you please provide reasons for your views on this?	

Comments, Suggestions, Agreement

13	Do you have any comments/suggestions around skills training/apprenticeships?	
13a	Comments?	
13b	Suggestions?	
14	Are you for OK with DGC retaining your contact details for the following reasons?	
14a	You can be notified of any potential training opportunities.	
14b	You can be alerted to any potential accreditation schemes.	

APPENDIX 2 - RESULTS

Over 90 contractors with either (3 incorporated all trades) roofing (8), joinery (12) or masonry skills (7) were identified based on local knowledge and by trawling the internet. Only 21 questionnaires were returned, despite numerous attempts to obtain returned questionnaires, which only approximates to a 23% success rate.

Company Information

Question 1

This related to the size of the contractor with;

- (1a) 4 contractors being sole traders,
- (1b) 11 contractors micro (0-9),
- (1c) 4 contractors being small (10-14)
- (1d) 2 contractors being medium (50-249)
- (1e) no contractors being large.

Question 2

This related to their role

- (2a) 19 contractors said they acted as lead contractor and
- (2b) 16 contractors saying they acted as sub-contractor
- 14 contractors saying they took on both roles

Workforce and skills

Question 3

This related to the number in their workforce who had a particular skill.

- 3a 35 employees were skilled in working with lime mortar
- 3b 4 employees were skilled in stone carving
- 3c 31 employees were skilled in natural slating
- 3d 29 employees were skilled in roofing leadwork
- 3e 22 employees were skilled in sash and case windows
- 3f 20 employees were skilled in timber moulding work

Question 4

This related to the difficulty in sourcing skills.

- 4a 6 contractors said they had difficulty with working with lime mortar
- 4b 7 contractors said they had difficulty with stone carving
- 4c 4 contractors said they had difficulty with natural slating
- 4d 6 contractors said they had difficulty with roofing leadwork
- 4e 4 contractors said they had difficulty with sash and case windows
- 4f 4 contractors said they had difficulty with timber moulding work

Question 5

This related to the reasons why specific skills were difficult to source.

- 5a 13 contractors said it was due to a lack of training
- 5b 4 contractors said it was due to lack of interest
- 5c Comments included:
 - Training not provided at local college
 - Lack of demand
 - One said it wasn't an issue as colleagues trained up younger people
 - Masonry qualifications not available in Scotland

Question 6

This related to the skills contractors feel they could do with in their workforce.

- 6a 5 contractors said working with lime mortar
- 6b 1 contractor said stone carving
- 6c 6 contractors said natural slating
- 6d 6 contractors said roofing leadwork
- 6e 8 contractors said sash and case windows
- 6f 4 contractors said timber moulding work

Question 7

This related to the skills contractors find difficulty in obtaining training.

- 7a 5 contractors said working with lime mortar
- 7b 4 contractors said stone carving
- 7c 2 contractors said natural slating
- 7d 3 contractors said roofing leadwork
- 7e 8 contractors said sash and case windows
- 7f 4 contractors said timber moulding work

Question 8

This related to the workforce.

- 8a 6 contractors said 0-25% of the workforce is likely to retire in the next 5 years
2 contractors said 26-50% of the workforce is likely to retire in the next 5 years
1 contractors said over 50% of the workforce is likely to retire in the next 5 years
- 8b 7 contractors said that 0-25% of the workforce was under 30
4 contractors said that 26-50% of the workforce was under 30
4 contractors said that over 50% of the workforce was under 30
- 8c 8 contractors said they were unlikely to recruit apprentices in the next two years
12 contractors said they were likely to recruit apprentices in the next two years
- 8d 11 contractors said they were less likely to recruit apprentices who have had pre-apprenticeship training
9 contractors said they were more likely to recruit apprentices who have had pre-apprenticeship training
- 8e Comments relating to 8c and 8d included:
 - We train up people ourselves
 - Tend to sub contract skills
 - Finding young people with enough commitment
 - Health and safety as well as insurance premiums
 - It would be good to be able to source ready trained people
 - Started an apprentice in 2022
 - Not enough financial assistance available

Question 9

This related to where apprentices came from.

- 9a 12 contractors said they came from school
- 9b 11 contractors said they came from further education
- 9c 8 contractors said they were obtained by word of mouth
- 9d 4 contractors said they were sourced through social media
- 9e 1 contractor said their apprentice was obtained through a CITB training scheme and
1 contractor said they were a son of a friend

Work and contracts

Question 10

This related to work with historic buildings.

- 10a 11 contractors said 0-25% of their work was with historic buildings
3 contractors said 26-50% of their work was with historic buildings
3 contractors said over 50% of their work was with historic buildings
- 10b 9 contractors said No to working on thermally upgrading a historic building in the last three years
10 contractors said Yes to working on thermally upgrading a historic building in the last three years

Question 11

This related to confidence in building work over the next 2 – 3 years.

- 11a 8 contractors said they were strongly confident
- 11b 8 contractors said they were reasonably confident
- 11c 3 contractors were not confident
- 11e comments included:
 - Lack of investment in area
 - Customers not prepared to pay the higher costs
 - Have good landbank providing security
 - With the skills shortage and the amount of skilled people due to retire or leaving the industry I feel there will be more work and not enough people to carry this out, unfortunately bigger projects go to companies outside the area, but as has been proved when work picks up they move and project in this area suffer.
 - Company has a long standing name within the area however the state of the current economy will likely cause clients to evaluate potential projects and cut back or scrap due to increasing costs.
 - Already have worked booked for next 12 months and ongoing contracts
 - Cost of Living/Fuel
 - We specialise in masonry repairs, rebuilding and maintenance of road bridges over water courses, Essential work not likely to dry up.

Question 12

This related to changes in the demand for work on historic buildings and structures.

12a 14 contractors said they didn't expect a change in the amount over the next 5 – 10 years

3 contractors said they did expect a change

12b comments from those who said yes included:

- Less competition on a local level
- Will be less as its mostly churches that we repair and a lot of churches are now closing
- Due to building having to meet higher environmental standards
- Finding that thermal upgrading/ air tightness work increasing at present

Question 13

This related to comments/suggestions around skills training and apprenticeships.

13a comments included:

- Colleges should do more to train students both in practical and theory on heritage work
- There is a severe lack of highly skilled tradesmen in all the trades in this area
- Masonry - shortage of stone masonry, get into primary schools to tell kids about these roles e.g. construction etc.
- We fully believe in apprenticeship training
- I employ 2 apprentices and have another two lads who were apprentices and are now time

served, I find this to be the best way as I've had joiners come from being trained elsewhere and they really haven't been shown any traditional joinery skills or have any understanding of working in older buildings, the college don't seem to teach them the skills either as the lectures at the college may have only been used to site work or domestic work. I was lucky enough to learn my trade with Andrew Campbell and sons where he had an older generation of joiners who took the time to pass on their knowledge and skills and I'm now trying to pass these skills onto the apprentices I bring through if I don't then these skills will die out.

- Dumfries and Galloway do not have any roofing apprenticeship training courses and colleges available in the area which has an effect on businesses taking on young people.
- Schools could direct pupils to consider an apprenticeship in the construction industry. Skilled tradespersons can make a good living in this area. Everyone seems obsessed with going to university and then being in a job they are over qualified for
- We would always encourage additional local courses for enhancing/refreshing our skills
- The pay in our dirty, hard, outdoor trade is generally not enough to attract the young suitable people to choose it as a career. Remuneration does not reflect the intelligence and skills required.

13b suggestions included:

- Condense time at college to concentrate on the actual trade skills and less on the subjects that are irrelevant
- With retirement age increasing it is unfair to ask hard working tradesmen to work into late 60s before they retire, however it would be wise to offer them teaching jobs when they can pass on their skills.
- Would like to see Dumfries and Galloway College start a roofing course within the college as the roofing trade is a big business in D and G
- I think groundworks (Concreting, drainage, paving, kerbing etc.) should be a recognised trade within the construction industry to encourage school leavers to consider this as a profession . This is an area which can be hard to resource
- Lime pointing courses for use on traditional building, covering repointing methods/techniques, type of lime, mixes and protection.
- More advanced courses
- Austerity leads to neglect of public assets. Investment needed.

Question 14

This related to permission to remain on the database.

- 3 contractors requested they did not remain on the database and 18 contractors were happy to remain and 17 receive future alerts.

APPENDIX 3 - REFLECTIONS

Company Information

Question 1

This relates to the size of the contractor and suggests that there is a reasonable range in size of the contractors though lacking any really large contractors.

Question 2

This related to the role of the contractor and suggests that contractors are largely flexible in working on their own or as a sub-contractor.

Workforce and skills

Question 3

This related to the number in their workforce who had a particular skill.

The responses suggest a reasonable amount of the contractors have traditional building skills within their workforce (this may be a reflection of the contractors who were prepared to submit a questionnaire).

Question 4

This related to the difficulty in sourcing skills.

This (and responses to later questions) suggests that there are underlying problems with regard to sourcing.

Question 5

This related to the reasons why specific skills were difficult to source.

Lack of available training is obviously felt to be an issue as well as a lack of interest.

Question 6

This related to the skills contractors feel they could do with in their workforce.

Apart from stone carving there was demand for all the highlighted skills.

Question 7

This related to the skills contractors find difficulty in obtaining training.

Of the highlighted skills sash and case windows appeared the most difficult to source and natural slating the least difficult although responses to later questions suggest natural slating training is an issue.

Question 8

This related to the workforce.

Retirement does not appear to be a big issue and there appears to be a reasonable number of younger people in the workforce.

There are a majority who intend recruiting an apprentice and who would like them to have pre-apprenticeship training.

Finding young committed people was the opinion and a couple of contractors said they preferred to provide their own skills training.

Question 9

This related to where apprentices came from.

A large majority came from school and further education establishments.

Work and contracts

Question 10

This related to work with historic buildings.

Nearly 80% of contractors have worked on historic buildings and nearly half have worked on thermal upgrades of historic buildings.

Question 11

This related to confidence in building work over the next 2 – 3 years.

The responses suggest reasonably strong confidence in obtaining work over the next few years.

Those who were not so confident suggest lack of investment in the area, higher prices are issues.

One contractor indicated he was booked up for the next 12 months.

Question 12

This related to changes in the demand for work on historic buildings and structures.

The comments broadly reflect an expectation that demand will change for the better with only one contractor indicating that due to the closure of the churches he works on he expects his workload to drop.

Question 13

This related to comments/suggestions around skills training and apprenticeships.

The length and content of the responses to this question suggests that there is significant interest in apprenticeships and training with some constructive feedback being provided.

The lack of training at Dumfries and Galloway College is a critical concern and there is obviously a need for more local courses

Question 14

This related to permission to remain on the database.

The four contractors who didn't wish to have their details retained will be removed prior the contractor list of the other 16 contractors being passed to DGC.