

NEW CHAIR APPOINTED TO CITB-CONSTRUCTIONSKILLS

CAPTAIN of industry, James Wates has been appointed as the new chairman of the Industry Training Board, CITB-ConstructionSkills, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has announced.

James Wates will take the chairmanship from Sir Michael Latham at the end of March, having previously served on the board for 7 years.

The two-day per week job, based in London is one of the construction industry's most influential positions, with the Chair leading the CITB-ConstructionSkills Board in making strategic decisions about training and shaping the future direction of the construction industry.

Skills Minister Kevin Brennan, said: "I am very pleased to confirm James Wates' appointment as the new chairman of CITB-ConstructionSkills. James' experience of working on the CITB-ConstructionSkills board and with other skills organisations means he is well placed to lead the training board.

"The construction industry has struggled during the downturn, but we are seeing the first signs of recovery within the sector, and we must support this by providing the right training and skills opportunities to allow for growth and to secure the industry's future."

The role of Chair is key to the construction sector. Since 2002, Sir Michael Latham has been one of the industry's leading voices, representing construction at the highest level. However, the recession has made this role even more crucial and the new chairman will be called upon to represent the industry with an influential voice both politically and with other industry leaders.

James Wates said:

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to take on the Chairmanship of CITB-Construction Skills at this critical time for our industry. The economic pressures create challenges for the whole training and skills agenda but if we are to maintain a world class construction sector in the future we have to continue to invest - but I think we have to be much smarter in how we go about it.

"The importance of CITB-ConstructionSkills to the industry is clearly demonstrated by the commitment of my predecessors in this role and I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of such industry luminaries as Sir Cliff Chetwood, Hugh Try and, of course, Sir Michael Latham."

James Wates has worked in the construction industry all his life, starting on site as a schoolboy during holidays. He read Estate Management at college after which he joined Wates Construction as a management trainee, progressing through line management to running sites before taking on a General Manager role in 1989. Since then he has progressed through the company to be Deputy Chairman of the main Wates Group Board.

Outside of the Wates Group, he is involved with several industry bodies. He chairs the UK Contractors Group, he is Senior Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Building and a Vice Chairman of the CBI Construction Council. He is also a Board Member and Treasurer of the British Council for Offices, a Governor of Emanuel School, a trustee of the Wates Foundation and the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled, a member of the London Skills and Employment Board and he also sits on the London Regional Council of The Prince's Trust.

He was appointed a Commissioner for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills in April 2009 and since October 2009 has taken on the role of lead National Diploma Employer Champion with a particular focus on the Construction and Built Environment Diploma.

Deputy Chairman of CITB-ConstructionSkills, Judy Lowe welcomed the appointment:

“James’s appointment as Chair of CITB-ConstructionSkills is wonderful news. Having spent his entire career in this sector, he has absolutely the right credentials to lead us not only through the tougher economic times, but also to help us capitalise on the opportunities that will arise when the industry returns to growth in 2011.

“His in-depth and broad understanding of business and our industry, as well as personal commitment to helping deliver a highly-skilled workforce for the construction industry will prove instrumental in helping CITB-ConstructionSkills to ensure that our mission of right skills, right time, right place is delivered appropriately and effectively.”

Mark Farrar, Chief Executive, CITB-ConstructionSkills said: “This is a very important and high profile role for the construction industry at what is a time of change and opportunity – as well as great challenge. I would like to take this time to thank Sir Michael Latham for the exemplary service he has given to CITB-ConstructionSkills over the past eight years and wish him the very best for his retirement. Under his guidance the organisation has come an extremely long way and his legacy has certainly put us on the right course for the future.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. Mr Wates holds the following public appointments:
 - London Skills Employment Board; and
 - UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

2. The post is a part-time appointment of two days a week for which a salary of £22,500 per annum is payable.
3. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Commissioner of Public Appointments' Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies.

About CITB-ConstructionSkills

CITB-ConstructionSkills is an Industry Training Board and has Levy-raising powers granted through an Act of Parliament. The Levy is viewed by government and industry as the best way to fund training in the construction industry, and an annual independent survey is undertaken to assess support for the system.

CITB-ConstructionSkills is a partner in ConstructionSkills, the Sector Skills Council for the construction industry. Together with CITB-ConstructionSkills Northern Ireland and CIC, we are working to deliver a safe, professional and fully qualified construction workforce through the industry's Sector Skills Agreement. We are responsible for raising employer engagement in training, securing appropriate funding, producing labour market data, and developing standards and qualifications that meet employer needs.

CITB-ConstructionSkills supports a sector which is central to the UK economy, generating over 8% of GDP and a turnover of more than £210bn a year.

CITB-ConstructionSkills is helping construction employers during the downturn and working to maintain skills so the industry can respond when the upturn begins.

James Wates:

Mr Wates has been a CITB-ConstructionSkills board member for seven years (including chairing the CITB-ConstructionSkills audit committee). He has had several high profile positions in the industry, including managing director of a top 20 Construction firm.

He has also represented industry interests to Government on a number of boards and committees, including as chairman of the UK Contractors Group which he was also instrumental in forming.