

Minutes of the CITB Board meeting held at 9am on 20 November 2025 at The Hilton Hotel, MK Stadium, Milton Keynes and remotely via Microsoft Teams

FOI Notice

Where asterisks (*) appear, these sections have been excluded from the minutes before placing on the website as the subject under discussion falls within one or more of the exemptions contained in Part II of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and can be reasonably withheld.

PRESENT

Peter Lauener	Board Chair
Rachael Cunningham	Board Trustee
Michael Green	Board Trustee
Owain Jones	Board Trustee
Kevin McLoughlin	Board Trustee
Stephen Gray	Board Trustee

STAFF INVITEES

Tim Balcon	CEO
Adrian Beckingham	Executive Director, Strategy & Policy
Kirsty Evans	Executive Director, Education and Training
Martina Doyle-Turner	Executive People Director
Deborah Madden	Executive Director, Nations Engagement
Nick Payne	Chief Financial Officer
Nadine Pemberton Jn Baptiste	Executive Director, Legal, Governance & Compliance
Angela Alabi	Head of Corporate Governance and Board Secretary
Anna Pfende	Corporate Governance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE

Angela Forbes	Scotland Nation Council Chair
Ron Hill	Stone King (item 5 only)

GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS

Kevin Dixon	Department of Education (DfE) – remote
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STAFF INVITEES FOR SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS

Gillian Brewin	Head of Strategic Planning - items 3-4
Angela Hayward	Head of - item 3-4
Mark Knight	Head of Comms - item 3-4
John Raffel	Finance Director – remote – items 3-4, and 6
Rachael Baker	Head of Business Planning & Performance – remote – items 3-4

APOLOGIES

Nikki Davis	Board Trustee
Julia Heap	Board Trustee
Herman Kok	Board Trustee
Holly Price	Board Trustee
Sophie Seddon	Board Trustee

ITEM 1: WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Peter Lauener (PL) welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that the discussion would be recorded solely to support minute-taking, and that the recording would be deleted once the minutes were approved. All attendees confirmed they were comfortable with this arrangement.

1.2 Apologies were received and accepted from Nikki Davis (ND), Herman Kok (HK), Sophie Seddon (SS), Holly Price (HP), and Julia Heap (JH).

1.3 PL gave a verbal update on the SkillBuild event. He, along with several Trustees and members of the Executive Team, toured the event and observed the high standard of competition. He also highlighted an encouraging trend of more female apprentices in the competition.

1.4 PL reported that at the Board Dinner the previous evening, Trustees were joined by members of the England National Council. They received a presentation from Richard Bullock (RBU) on the development of the SkillBuild event as a standalone event. Trustees were impressed by the performance data and how the event had grown over the years, including the increase in female participation and some signs of more finalists from ethnic minorities. RBU added that plans were in place to broaden the event's reach through social media, including the involvement of an influencer.

1.5 PL then outlined the key aims of the agenda and noted that items 3 (Strategic Plan) and 4 (Draft Business Plan and Draft Priorities Letter) would be considered together due to their close connection.

1.6 As final decisions were required under the Strategic Plan agenda item, PL proposed dedicating the full meeting time to this, with items 7–17 taken as noted and any items requiring approval considered approved unless Trustees wished to raise specific points. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest made in addition to those already recorded on the Board's Register of Interests.

Kevin Dixon (KD), Gillian Brewin (GB), Angela Heyward (AH), Mark Knight (MK), John Raffel (JR) and Rachael Baker (RB) joined the meeting.

ITEM 3: STRATEGIC PLAN

3.1 The Board noted the supporting papers.

3.2 Tim Balcon (TB) and Nick Payne (NP) provided an overview of CITB's current position, including the forecast cashflow over the remaining period of the Strategic Plan 2025-29 (Plan), if no remedial action was taken. NP explained that demand for support from employers had been higher than expected in the first year of the Plan and reminded Trustees that Levy income was fixed under the current Levy Order until 2028-29. The intention remained to provide c£1bn of support to Industry over the life of the Plan, but affordability in later years would require an adjustment to Grant and Funding schemes, alongside supporting new UK Government initiatives to match forecast cashflows. He also highlighted that the Plan was developed in advance of expenditure being incurred and that in-year forecasting remained a challenge, in part because of delays in receiving (and in some cases not being given) access to essential Government data such as on Apprenticeship starts, which made accurate forecasts more difficult.

3.3 Trustees discussed the cash position and CITB's operating costs. It was noted that Trustees had declined to increase Levy rates proposed at the last Consensus, so as not to increase the burden on employers, and this would have needed some adjustment to the plan in due course, but it had been expected that there would have been longer to make the necessary adjustment. There were however no immediate cash shortage and JR reported that CITB was holding £47.1m in cash on the day, with further receipts due in and c£15m expected to be paid out. Current forecasts suggested that, without intervention, cash could fall to around £30m by 31 March 2026, which would leave little margin for unexpected events. Trustees agreed that decisive action was needed to ensure CITB's financial viability through 2027.

3.4 GB circulated a list of proposed interventions to bolster the cash position deficit. Trustees reviewed each intervention in turn.

3.5.1 Pension scheme surplus

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3.5.3 Support UK Government priorities

Trustees reaffirmed the importance of supporting UK Government policy commitments, including new entrant outcomes. They agreed to continue funding these areas in line with demand and within the agreed caps.

3.5.4 DECISION: Trustees agreed to support UK Government priorities investment in line with demand.

3.5.5 Continue to offer direct training through the National Construction College

Trustees discussed direct training through the National Construction College (NCC). They agreed in principle to continue operating the NCC, with investment levels in improving facilities and systems guided by CITB's affordability.

3.5.6 DECISION: Trustees approved maintaining and investing in the NCC Strategy, noting that some investment plans would be paused until affordable

3.5.7 Implement annual price increase on existing products

Trustees agreed to increase prices for existing commercial products on an annual basis and to review the profitability of the current course portfolio.

3.5.8 DECISION: Trustees agreed to implementing annual price increases to existing commercial products and conduct a review of the profitability of current products.

3.5.9 Commercial strategy to expand products and markets

Trustees considered the options to diversify and compete in more commercial products and services, including through the expansion of provision at NCC. Michael Green (MG), Chair of the National Construction College and Apprenticeship Committee (NCC&AC), reported the Committee's view that investment in technology was essential to support the desire to increase commercial income opportunities. Trustees noted this requirement.

3.5.10 DECISION: Trustees agreed in principle to adopt a Commercial Strategy, noting the need for technology development at NCC.

3.5.11 Retention, productivity and research & development allocation

Trustees emphasised the importance of this investment, noting it would require ongoing funding.

3.5.12 DECISION: Trustees agreed to continue investing in measures to support retention and productivity and research and development.

3.5.13 Training Groups

Trustees noted that the decision to cease funding Training Groups had already been made via correspondence. Alternative support would be provided for specialist trades and for value added activities.

3.5.14 Industry Impact Fund

It was noted that the Fund was capped and that stopping it would produce minimal savings.

3.5.15 DECISION: Trustees agreed to retain the Industry Impact Fund at the current capped level.

3.5.16 Sector Skills Plans

Trustees noted that withdrawing from Sector Skills Plans would present reputational risk to CITB.

3.5.17 DECISION: Trustees agreed to continue investment in Sector Skills Plans recognising limited budget flexibility.

3.5.18 Onsite Experience Hubs

Trustees noted the mixed performance across Onsite Experience Hubs and discussed the lack of a clear post-Hub pathway. Following deliberation, Trustees agreed that all Hubs be reviewed and only those performing well be retained for an additional year.

3.5.19 ACTION: GB: Conduct a review of Hubs' performance to determine those that would continue to be funded by CITB.

3.5.20 DECISION: To review all Onsite Experience Hubs and retain only those high-performing Hubs for one further year (2026-27).

3.5.21 Shared Apprenticeship Scheme

The decision to remove England shared apprenticeships was made at the Strategic Plan Refresh workshop, as they were not adding any value.

3.6 Options for reducing employer funding.

3.6.1 Trustees reviewed the Short Duration Grant training offer and raised concerns about several courses proposed for removal. They highlighted that courses such as SMSTS, SSSTS, First Aid, Mental Health, and EDI were relied on by employers to demonstrate competence, even if they were not linked to Card Schemes. Trustees noted the risk of significant employer backlash and the need for clarity on which standards were essential (competence-linked) versus discretionary. GB was tasked with reviewing the Short Duration Grant training offer and retain only those that were adding value. As the Short Duration Grant Plant training had been reviewed recently and was part of this scheme, it was agreed that it would remain unchanged. It was noted that Site Safety Plus required further analysis because it was widely used but not linked to a Card Scheme; Trustees asked the team to review this separately.

3.6.2 ACTION: GB to review CITB-funded Short Duration Grant training and retain only value adding courses.

3.6.3 ACTION: GB: Review the Site Safety Plus offering and assess alignment with the Card Schemes.

3.6.4 GB noted that savings from the Short Duration Grant could release up to £3m to redirect to Employer Networks with clear guidance to be issued on eligible activities. The Industry Funding Committee (IFC) was tasked by Trustees with defining the scope of funded activities under Employer Networks.

3.6.5 ACTION: The Industry Funding Committee to agree the scope of activities to be funded through Employer Networks.

3.6.6 Trustees reviewed the risks of removing all Short Duration Grant training (excluding Plant) in January 2026 versus April 2026. It was noted that implementing changes from January 2026 would free up funds earlier for the Employer Networks, while an April 2026 start would give rise to less

savings to reinvest. Emerging consensus supported a January 2026 implementation, subject to careful management of pre-booked courses and communications. The timeline was confirmed as:

- Announcement - 8 December 2025
- Implementation - 7 January 2026

3.6.7 DECISION: Trustees agreed to the following:

- Continue funding for Plant-related Short Duration Grant training with no reduction in funding.
- Continue funding Scaffolding and Tunnelling training, as these have direct competence links.
- Only funding courses that demonstrate a clear link to competence.
- Site Safety Plus to undergo further review before a decision is made.
- Changes to the Short Duration Grant scheme to be announced on 8 December 2025 with implementation starting on 7 January 2026.
- The Comms message to highlight that CITB was changing how funding was accessed and that employers should use Employer Networks for required training that was previously supported by Short Duration Grants.

3.7 GB guided the Trustees through interventions designed to establish funds for investment in the NCC, IT, and alternative pathways. It was noted that Employer Networks were central to the proposed redesign. Trustees chose to adopt a set of interventions rather than simply reducing funding for training delivered through Employer Networks. Each intervention was reviewed in turn.

3.7.1 Maintain budget and increase ROI of funding commitment

Trustees agreed to maintain current Employer Network budgets *. They discussed tightening the scope of the training offer from Employer Networks, including removing low-value or out-of-scope training such as first aid from eligibility. Trustees also considered whether large employer funding should be delivered through a more suitable mechanism, such as the Large Employer Fund. Further feasibility work was required before any decision is finalised. Trustees requested an impact assessment to understand who would be affected by these changes.

3.7.2 ACTION: GB: Prepare an impact statement for the different employer sizes.

3.7.3 DECISION: Trustees agreed

- Employer Networks to work within agreed budget.
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- Tighten the scope of funding via Employer Networks.
- Remove large employers from Employer Network scope.
- Conduct an impact assessment of those that will be affected by decision made by Trustees.

3.7.4 Trustees discussed the possibility of increasing the Levy and noted that the earliest opportunity would be the 2029 Levy Order, effective in 2029-30. Adrian Beckingham (AB) highlighted that the Levy Strategy Committee (LSC) had previously considered raising Levy rates for the 2026 Order but found no appetite for doing so.

3.7.5 Reduce Travel-to-Train funding

Trustees strongly supported reviewing Travel-to-Train funding. It was noted that the funding was being used more broadly than originally intended, particularly to address limited training availability in remote regions.

3.7.6 DECISION: Trustees agreed to continue funding Travel to Train but asked IFC to review the purpose of the Fund.

3.7.7 ACTION: IFC to review the purpose of the Travel-to-Train fund.

3.7.8 Reduce funding for Qualification Grants

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3.7.9 DECISION: Trustees:

- Agreed to withdraw Attendance Grants for higher level qualification.
- Agreed to withdraw support for level 7 in alignment with UK Government rules.
- Agreed to retain Achievement Grants that are linked to competence schemes.
- Agreed to align Achievement Grant Rates across all relevant qualifications.
- Agreed to retain funding for the Scottish 'Advance Crafts' in the interim while a review was being carried out.

3.7.10 Change the Leadership and Management Fund for large employers

With several changes taking place, Trustees agreed to maintain the Fund and expand the scope of the Fund.

3.7.11 DECISION: Maintain the Leadership and Management Fund for large employers in the interim and expand its scope.

3.7.12 Reduce funding for Apprenticeships

Trustees considered the proposal to adjust funding for Apprenticeships but agreed not to make any immediate changes until a full review of new entrant support had been completed.

3.7.13 DECISION: No immediate changes to be made to Apprenticeship Grants.

3.7.14 *

3.7.15 To improve Trustees' visibility of CITB's finances, it was agreed that they would receive enhanced monthly insights through a newly established finance monitoring group.

3.7.16 ACTION: A monthly financial monitoring group to be established.

3.7.17 With many changes being unpopular but necessary, Trustees stressed the importance of:

- clear rationale,
- consistency of Comms across staff,
- and sequencing the messages so employers understand what support remains.

3.7.18 Comms lines would be circulated to Trustees for rapid feedback.

3.7.19 ACTION: MK/AA: Full Comms plan for the funding changes to be shared with Trustees for their feedback before its implemented.

ITEM 4: DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN AND DRAFT PRIORITIES LETTER

4.1 The Board noted the supporting reports.

Gillian Brewin (GB), Angela Heyward (AH), Mark Knight (MK), John Raffel (JR) and Rachael Baker (RB) left the meeting.

Ron Hill (RH) joined the meeting

ITEM 5: EXTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT

5.1 The Board noted the External Effectiveness Report. RH was invited to give an overview of the report.

5.2 RH highlighted three main areas from the Report:

5.2.1 Governance practices improvements

Governance practice had demonstrably improved since the previous Board review conducted by Stone King. The Board had effectively expanded the use of wider governance spaces beyond formal meetings.

5.2.2 Sharpening Board Focus

Further progress could be made by more closely linking agendas and reports to CITB's core purpose. RH observed that Board meetings occasionally resembled senior management team reporting sessions rather than strategic, board-level governance discussions.

5.2.3 Decision-Making Discipline

RH emphasised the importance of the Board clearly converting discussions into decisions. Formal recording of decisions was essential to ensure the Board avoids functioning as a "talking shop".

5.3 PL thanked RH for his Report, stating that Trustees had already reflected on its conclusions. He advised that he and Angela Alabi (AA) would draft an action plan for discussion at the next Board meeting and invited Trustees to highlight any omissions or questions arising from the Report. RH confirmed his willingness to support development of the forthcoming action plan.

5.4 ACTION: AA/PL with the help of RH to draft an action plan based on the review for the next Board meeting.

5.5 At Angela Forbes' (AF) request, RH shared his observations on the Nation Councils. He noted that:

- The Nation Councils had improved significantly since the last review, particularly in their connectivity with the Board.
- Greater value could be achieved if the Board set specific strategic questions for the Councils, avoiding duplication of Board agendas.
- More structured inquiry would strengthen the Councils' role and provide the Board with more targeted insight.

5.6 DECISION: Trustees discussed how to balance the high-level industry engagement valued by Nation Council members with the need for more structured input. They agreed that:

- There were opportunities to strengthen two-way communication with the Nation Councils.
- Reinstating meetings between the Chair and the three Nation Council Chairs could improve alignment.
- The action plan to include proposals to enhance strategic question-setting and communication flow.

5.7 ACTION: AA to reintroduce meetings between Board Chair and the three Nation Council Chairs.

5.8 ACTION: AA/PL to develop a method to send strategic questions to Nation Councils.

5.9 RH proposed that CITB consider adopting a formal stakeholder voice framework covering:

- identification of key stakeholder groups
- engagement methods
- governance controls
- a process for monitoring and synthesising stakeholder insight.

Trustees expressed strong interest, noting its value in complementing the NEXUS customer panel and strengthening strategic engagement with Employer Networks and Prescribed Organisations. RH offered to share example frameworks and explore how CITB could adapt one.

5.10 ACTION: RH to share stakeholder voice framework examples.

5.11 Nadine Pemberton Jn Baptiste (NPJB) welcomed the Report's focus on Board diversity, emphasising that diverse governing bodies are an industry-wide priority and a key element of good governance. The Board acknowledged the need to continue improving representation and ensuring diverse perspectives inform strategic decision-making.

5.12 ACTION: AA to incorporate diversity priorities into the governance action plan.

5.13 In response to a question about best-practice Board agendas in high-performing organisations, RH explained that strong Boards:

- Structure agendas around strategic themes rather than management reporting lines.
- Use workshops and deep dives to triangulate views and explore complex issues.
- Reserve formal Board meetings for assurance, progress updates, and decision-making.

PL agreed, noting that Trustees found the recent Strategic Plan Refresh workshop particularly valuable. He proposed regular deep-dives such as sequential reviews of the three Strategic Pillars and clearer Board papers that specify the purpose of each agenda item.

RH left the meeting

JR joined the meeting

ITEM 6: ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS SIGN OFF

6.1 The Board noted the supporting papers.

6.2 NP introduced the item, noting that the National Audit Office (NAO) had issued an unqualified audit opinion, covering:

- financial statements
- regularity
- going concern status

6.3 NP and JR reported challenges during the audit due to NAO resourcing issues, including periods with no audit personnel. Some late adjustments had been raised, with net unadjusted errors totalling approximately £2m, which is well within the materiality threshold (£5.6m). Some items were classified as unadjusted because the NAO had been unable to audit changes made earlier in the year. The NAO also raised some concerns relating to the quality and timeliness of submissions from CITB. PL noted that there was scope for improving working relationships with the NAO and suggested that a post-audit review should involve the DWP. JR confirmed satisfaction with the final audit result despite operational difficulties.

6.4 DECISION: The Board approved the Annual Report, Accounts, and Letter of Representation.

JR left the meeting.

ITEM 7: MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS, ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

7.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 September 2025 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

7.2 Trustees noted the Summary of Board Actions and agreed that all completed actions could be closed.

ITEM 8: CEO REPORT, PERFORMANCE & STRATEGIC RISKS Q2

8.1. Trustees noted the supporting reports.

8.2 NP noted that the strategic risk report included a revised risk appetite for safeguarding, recognising that the safeguarding risk could not be fully eliminated even with appropriate controls. The NCC&AC Committee had reviewed the safeguarding risk tolerance and recommended increasing the risk appetite.

8.3 DECISION: The Board agreed to increase the safeguarding risk appetite to a realistic level, reflecting the residual risk despite full compliance.

ITEM 9: JOINT LEVY AND SKILLS STRATEGY CONSULTATION

9.1 The Board noted the Joint Levy and Skills Strategy consultation paper, and they approved the concept.

9.2 DECISION: Trustees approved the Joint Levy and Skill Strategy concept.

ITEM 10: SENIOR INFORMATION RISK OWNER (SIRO) ANNUAL REPORT

10.1 The Board noted the Senior Information Risk Owner Annual Report.

ITEM 11: POLICY APPROVAL

11.1 PF presented the changes to the Business Ethics & Counter Fraud Policy.

11.2 The Board reviewed the proposed amendments to the Business Ethics & Counter Fraud Policy and noted that no changes were being proposed to the Travel & Expenses Policy for Board Trustees, Committee Members and Nation Council Members.

11.3 DECISION: The Board APPROVED the Reserves Policy.

11.4 DECISION: The Board APPROVED the Treasury and Investment Policy.

11.5 DECISION: The Board APPROVED the Working Capital Policy.

11.6 DECISION: The Board APPROVED the Information Security Policy.

11.7 DECISION: The Board APPROVED the Operational Safeguarding Policy.

ITEM 12: SERIOUS INCIDENT ANNUAL REPORT

12.1 The Board noted the Serious Incident Annual Report.

ITEM 13: NATION COUNCILS – UPDATE REPORTS AND BOARD CONSOLIDATED RESPONSES

13.1 The Board noted the proposed responses to the key feedback raised by the three Nation Councils from their October 2025 meetings.

13.2 DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the proposed responses to the key feedback raised by the three Nation Councils from their October 2025 meetings.

ITEM 14: COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

14.1 DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the revised Terms of Reference for the Nomination, Appointments and Remuneration Committee.

14.2 DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the revised Terms of Reference for the Levy Strategy Committee.

ITEM 15. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

15.1 It was noted that the Board Seal had been used on 14 October 2025 for the appointment of new Trustees relating to CITB's Life Assurance Scheme.

ITEM 16: MEETING EVALUATION

16.1 Trustees evaluated the success of the meeting and agreed that all the key aims of the meeting had been achieved.

ITEM 17: CHAIR'S ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17.1 It was noted that several Trustees had received complaint letters regarding the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS) not having their contract for Fairness, Inclusion & Respect (FIR) training renewed, as it no longer represented value for money nor prioritised for investment compared to other interventions. This resulted in them losing £300k in annual funding. It was noted that CITB remained committed to FIR training, and the resources developed with CITB funding remained available for SCSS to utilise in the provision of their services. CITB also remained willing to promote their services to Industry, despite this funding line ending. TB was tasked with coordinating a response and keeping Trustees updated.

17.2 ACTION: TB to respond to letters from the Supply Chain Sustainability School regarding not renewing their contract.

17.3 *

17.4 *

17.5 It was confirmed that the next Board meeting would be held on Thursday 26 February 2026 in London.

17.6 There being no other business, PL declared the meeting closed.