Sustainability in the supply chain
The production of this report was supported by the following organisations and their supply chains.

**Balfour Beatty**
Balfour Beatty is a leading international infrastructure group. With 34,000 employees, we provide innovative and efficient infrastructure that underpins our daily lives, supports communities and enables economic growth. We finance, develop, build and maintain complex infrastructure such as transportation, power and utility systems, social and commercial buildings.

**Carillion**
Carillion is one of the UK’s leading integrated support services companies, with extensive construction capabilities, a substantial portfolio of Public Private Partnership projects and a sector-leading ability to deliver sustainable solutions.

**Kier Group plc**
Kier Group plc is a leading property, residential, construction and services group which invests in, builds, maintains and renews the places where we work, live and play.

**Willmott Dixon**
Willmott Dixon is a privately-owned construction, residential development and property support services company, with the ambition to create a huge and lasting positive impact on our society. This is not only through what we build and maintain; it’s through the fantastic efforts of all our people who make a major contribution to enhancing their local communities.

**Faithful+Gould**
Faithful+Gould is a worldwide integrated project and programme management consultancy, offering a versatile blend of property related professional services.

**Pick Everard**
Pick Everard is a dynamic, forward-thinking practice, providing a comprehensive range of project, cost and construction management, architectural, engineering and strategic consultancy services.

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**Executive Summary**

Over a two week period in summer 2016, Scape surveyed over 150 senior managers at public sector organisations across local and central government, along with a range of suppliers and subcontractors delivering built environment services.

These included contractors who provide construction and civil engineering services, consultancies who support the public sector and facilities management providers. This survey sought the opinion of tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the public sector supply chain.

We asked questions about the tendering process and bid opportunities, the stability of the supply chain, supply chain management, the skills shortage and an investigation into the sector’s reliance on public projects.

The responses provide revealing insight into the extent of the skills crisis within the supply chain, the need for greater SME engagement, the importance of the public sector in providing forward visibility of works to SMEs and the growing importance of social value and local economic growth.

We would like to extend our thanks to our national partners and their supply chain across the United Kingdom in contributing to this research.
Introduction

A shortage of skilled labour has caused the balance of power within the UK’s supply chain to shift considerably since the 2008 recession, from a top down model to a more collaborative working environment.

The public estate has also changed over this period. After seeing some growth between 2009 and 2011 the industries that support the public sector in developing and managing their estate and infrastructure – construction, civil engineering, consultancy and facilities management among others – have been inhibited by shifts in government spending. Public sector construction spending is still 4% lower than it was in 2008. As a result of these pressures, public sector organisations are putting an even greater emphasis on achieving value for money, and in ensuring projects and programmes not only fulfil the material need of the local community, but the local economy also sees a direct benefit from the project itself.

This report is an investigation into the dynamics of the relationship between the public and private sector and assesses ways in which partnership working, true collaboration and open dialogue can help to achieve mutual success. The report also seeks to examine the critical challenges facing the industry and proposes some suggestions as to how to address them together in partnership.

“Now more than ever we need to work more closely together in order to deliver for both the public sector and SMEs. We can only achieve sustainable levels of efficiency through a perpetual focus upon true collaboration, partnership and greater engagement with all stakeholders.”

Mark Robinson
Scape Group Chief Executive
The Public Sector Perspective

To achieve its objectives of maintaining efficient and fit for purpose assets that support the delivery of vital public services, the public sector depends upon a strong, highly capable and responsive supply chain.

However, a sustainable and appropriately skilled local supply chain is also highly valuable to the public sector because of its fundamental importance to the local economy.

This is particularly the case for local authorities and Central Government departments for whom local skills, economic development and job creation are primary concerns.

From the perspective of the public sector, there are a number of supply chain challenges, from the stability and sustainability of supply chains, to the skills shortage and wider supply chain management.

Our supply chain survey has revealed that the impact of these issues is already being felt across the public estate.

Tendering

Each year the value of public sector construction activity is around £30 billion1. It is vital that in austere times for both central and local government, this investment attains maximum value from the public purse. The public sector should also take an ‘entire lifecycle’ view of the built environment so that the local and regional value of facilities management services as well as technical specialists and consultants, along the full length of the supply chain, are taken into account.

Frameworks remain one of the most successful methods of procuring works and services in the public sector with 72% of public sector organisations surveyed stating that they use frameworks to procure goods and services from suppliers.

Frameworks remain the most flexible and cost effective form of procurement but they also offer a robust and fair way of appointing contractors for built environment projects.

However, a key issue in the tendering process from the perspective of the public sector remains the lack of forward visibility suppliers have of new public sector work. Of the public sector managers who participated in our survey, as many as 28% believe that suppliers are ‘poorly informed’ about opportunities to bid for work. Public sector managers are clearly aware of the issue and of the importance of resolving it to ensure its supply chain is engaged.

One of the available solutions to this challenge is to offer more information about projects further in advance of the opportunity to bid for work. This enables the contractors and service providers to prepare for greater levels of demand in the years ahead and recruit accordingly. Nearly a third (32%) of public sector managers who took part in the supply chain survey believe that opportunities for suppliers to bid for public sector work should become public knowledge more than 12 months before the project or contract is due to start.

1 ONS, Output in the Construction Industry, 2015.
The Public Sector Perspective

Sustainability in the supply chain

Our survey has demonstrated that “sustainability” in the context of the supply chain has a broad definition. For the public sector it means much more than using sustainable materials and efficient delivery methods.

Sustainability also means establishing a stable and appropriately skilled supply chain that is robust and flexible enough to adapt with the cyclical effects of the economy.

Our survey of public sector managers revealed that 70% believe providing long-term benefits for the local economy should be one of the biggest priorities for a sustainable supply chain. Furthermore, 54% agreed that delivering social value is one of the biggest priorities. However barriers still remain in achieving these desired outcomes. The most challenging of which is inadequate visibility of future contracts – 79% of public sector respondents to our survey cited this as a barrier to delivering a sustainable supply chain.

Skills shortage

The growing shortage of skills in the UK construction industry is well documented. To meet the rising demand for construction services and to replace the number of construction workers due to retire in the next five years, the UK needs to recruit as many as 1 million new workers into the construction industry by 2020.

Professional services are also particularly affected by the loss of the “baby boomer” generation to retirement, including the many consultancies who support the public sector through design, project management, quantity surveying, asset management and other technical services. Facilities management operators are also struggling to find staff with the right skills to support the public sector and manage their buildings, with apprenticeship funding not yet delivering enough new staff to fill the skills gap.

Our survey respondents agree, with 42% of public sector managers highlighting the skills shortage as one of the biggest barriers to a sustainable supply chain for their organisation.

1 Randstad, October 2015.
The Public Sector Perspective

Less documented is the impact this skills shortage has already had on public sector projects. Of the public sector managers who responded to our survey, 35% rated the skills shortage in their local area as ‘bad’ or ‘severe’.

This shortage is already impacting on delivery quality, with 85% of public sector respondents saying there had been some negative impact on the quality of workmanship they received. As well as the extra costs of poor quality work, the skills shortage is also putting pressure on local authority budgets, through the rising cost of skilled labour. Currently bricklayers in the UK can earn as much as £1,000 per week due to the pressures of the skills shortage. This was reflected in our survey, with 80% of public sector respondents stating that the skills shortage had a direct impact on their ability to keep projects on budget.

There is a very clear need for the supply chain to boost its skills and capacity to meet the public sector’s asset, estate and infrastructure challenges and ensure high quality project delivery. At the same time, the public sector must also see the wider benefits for the local community.

67% of public sector participants in our survey believe that using local skills and suppliers is the most important element of a healthy supply chain. It is obvious to suggest that a solution to this is to drive further investment into local skills, but to have the confidence to invest in training, local businesses require greater visibility of future pipelines of public sector work. This can only be achieved through greater transparency around upcoming projects and contracts.

Supply chain management

It is clear that the public sector expects more than just successful project delivery from their investment in their built environment.

Effective management of the supply chain is seen as a route for the public sector to deliver local economic benefits and social value. 50% of public sector respondents said that they would typically like to see 50% or more local spend within 20 miles of each project.

However, 80% of public sector respondents believe that the public sector ‘needs to do more’ to engage with its supply chain.

3 Recruitment and Employment Confederation, May 2016.
The Supply Chain Perspective

The supply chain serving the built environment is complex and diverse, and includes contractors, consultants, facilities management specialists, architects of varying sizes and specialisms, SMEs and micro-businesses.

Our survey engaged with suppliers who would define themselves as ‘Tier 1’, ‘Tier 2’ and ‘Tier 3’. For the purposes of this research, we have applied the following definitions:

1. **Tier 1 contractors**
   Organisations that have a direct commercial relationship with a public sector body and take a leading role in delivering a project or service. They are the main contractor.

2. **Tier 2 suppliers**
   Suppliers and subcontractors who have a direct working relationship with Tier 1 suppliers. They support the main contractor to deliver a project or service and may have been appointed on the recommendation of the client.

3. **Tier 3 suppliers**
   Suppliers and subcontractors working for Tier 2 suppliers. They do not have a direct commercial relationship with the public sector organisation. For example they may be technical specialists, tradesmen, builder’s merchants, equipment supply firms etc.

Reliance on the public sector

The public sector remains one of the most important clients for those who provide built environment services through the supply chain. However the nature of the public sector has changed as a result of the financial restrictions imposed since 2010; and that has also impacted the supply chain.

Of the businesses surveyed, 66% said that less than 50% of their work currently comes from the public sector. This is a decline from ten years ago, when the public sector was larger than it is today, but 64% of businesses stated that the public sector funds more than a quarter of their business, highlighting that the public sector is still a major source of work for businesses across the country.

Reliance on the public sector

Public sector spend across the built environment is critical to the continued success and growth of large parts of the industry, and indeed, the economy. Therefore it is in the interests of both the public and private sectors that the supply chain has clear visibility of upcoming projects and contracts, in order to plan ahead. In short, the two sides must come together to solve the industry’s capacity challenge, so that efficient, timely and cost effective delivery can be consistently achieved.

Tendering and bid opportunities

The procurement process through which suppliers are appointed has an influence on the overall health of the supply chain. Our survey reveals that frameworks, already an important way of procuring work for the public sector, are increasingly popular with contractors and suppliers.

45% of the businesses surveyed use frameworks for public sector projects and contracts, demonstrating that the industry is responding to the growing public sector demand for frameworks.

85% of public sector managers said quality of work had been affected by the skills shortage

Sustainability in the Supply Chain Survey 2016
Skills shortage
The stark realities of the skills shortage are being felt across all levels, with 58% of the contractors, consultants and service providers we surveyed stating that the skills shortage had a ‘negative impact’ on the quality of their workmanship.

The financial cost of the skills crisis is also being felt, with 39% of respondents saying that the skills shortage had a negative impact on their ability to keep to budget, with 1 in 10 listing this as a ‘critical’ impact on budget.

A contributory solution to the shortage is for the public and private sectors to actively work together in encouraging more young people to train in the industry and promote the wide array of attractive career prospects available. Although our survey has revealed the positive news that 69% of companies who provide built environment services employ between 1 and 10 apprentices, as many as 19% of supply chain respondents said they did not have an apprenticeship scheme.

Challenging perceptions about the industry and setting out the benefits of apprenticeships will be vital and must be sustained in the years ahead.

Supply chain management
Our survey asked those who provide built environment services for their views on what the top three priorities for a sustainable supply chain should be. Their response was revealing; long term operational stability was their core aim (72%), minimising waste and recycling came in second (63%), then supporting local economies (58%).

This echoes the view of the public sector, but above all else, suppliers are looking for stability within the economy and the industry, as are their employees and supply chain partners who require work during a downturn.

Again, however, there are significant barriers to achieving these aims. 75% of contractors and subcontractors cited inadequate coordination as one of their main obstacles, because of the level of resources this consumes.

Forward visibility of future contracts was identified by 70% of respondents, while the lack of sufficient skills within the industry is considered a major barrier for more than half (55%) of businesses.

But what makes a healthy supply chain? The clear response to this from the industry was stability. 67% of respondents said stable pricing was key, while 63% said stable employment patterns. Suppliers also cited time efficient delivery programs (46%), investment in skills and training (45%) and cost effective delivery programmes (41%) as vital in achieving a healthy supply chain.

The public and private sectors must actively work together in encouraging more young people to train in the industry and promote the wide array of attractive career prospects available.

A large proportion of the contractors, consultants and facilities management service providers who responded to our survey, (75%) agreed that the public sector needs to do more to engage with its supply chain. This is almost equal to the proportion of public sector managers (80%) who felt the same. This demonstrates the pressing need for both sides to work together to understand the issues and resolve them for the good of the industry, through initiatives such as ongoing meet the buyer events that reveal the long term aspirations for a town, city or region.
The SME Perspective

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the lifeblood of the UK economy and the construction industry, as well as making up the majority of the supply chain for public sector projects and contracts.

Many of the consultancies who deliver technical expertise on built environment projects are SMEs, while facilities management requires a strong network of small local suppliers to support delivery.

Reliance on the public sector

There are clear ongoing risks that face a small firm that is dependent on public sector projects – particularly during a period of economic uncertainty and austerity. Over a quarter (26%) of the small and medium sized businesses that we surveyed said that more than 50% of their work comes from the public sector. This is reflective of the industry as a whole.

Tendering

Frameworks are an important way for SMEs to get public sector contracts and 42% of the SMEs we surveyed said they received work through public sector frameworks. The open and high profile nature of frameworks increasingly provide opportunities for SMEs in improving accessibility to public sector work. This is a high priority for Scape and other framework operators across the United Kingdom.

The benefits of having accessible and transparent information about future opportunities is important to SMEs, and despite the high value threshold, over a third (36%) of SMEs said they learned about new opportunities to bid for work through OJEU (The Official Journal of the European Union).

Traditional means of securing work still remain important, with 88% of SMEs receiving work through invitations to tender or quote directly by a procuring body or client.

Bid opportunities

If stability is a major aim for operators in the public sector supply chain, it is no surprise that forward visibility of future contracts is important for SMEs looking to plan ahead, manage their business to accommodate future workloads and achieve the growth they seek.

However, of the SMEs who took part in our survey, 51% said they did not feel well informed about future public sector contracts. Currently only 7% of SME suppliers are aware of public sector projects more than 18 months before they can bid for the work, and almost a quarter (23%) of SMEs would like to know about contract opportunities up to two years before the contract is due to start. This major challenge for SMEs is one that could be addressed by the public sector and the industry through digital means and coordinated meet the buyer forums.
**Skills shortage**

Our survey has revealed the scale of the skills shortage within the industry and the impact this is already having on the public sector and its ability to deliver locally. 46% of SMEs rated the national skills shortage as ‘severe’.

The effect is most heavily felt among SMEs, for whom people and skills development are major financial investments. 57% of SMEs said that the skills shortage was one of the biggest barriers to maintaining a sustainable supply chain.

The problem is acute within regional businesses, who find it difficult to get the right profile of skills they need in their area. 85% of SMEs said there was a skills shortage in their local area.

**Supply chain management**

Our supply chain survey has consistently revealed the importance of stability for both the public sector and the contractors and service providers who support it. For SMEs this is equally important, particularly in relation to skills and employment. 64% of SMEs said that stable employment patterns are the most important element of a healthy supply chain. Stable employment patterns occur when the supply chain workload is more predictable and subcontracting is less prevalent.

To continue to deliver for the public sector and provide economic and social benefits, SMEs must have clear visibility and a positive, long-term relationship with their clients. 77% of SMEs believe the public sector needs to do more to engage with its supply chain, and it is clear that the government could do more to create the right conditions for the public sector and SMEs to collaborate. The advancement of digital communications could help to improve engagement with SMEs, and a government-driven digital programme could make information about opportunities much more accessible and make it easier for businesses to connect with prospective clients and partners.

**The SME Perspective**

The desire amongst SMEs to upgrade their current skill sets was very clear from our survey, which revealed that 46% of SMEs said investment in skills and training was one of the most important elements of a healthy supply chain.

However, for SMEs, recruitment can be challenging and expensive, while the shortage is having an impact on suppliers’ ability to meet the needs of their clients. 15% of SMEs said the skills shortage had a ‘critical impact’ on their ability to keep to budget and a majority (58%) said there had been a negative impact on the quality of workmanship as a result of the skills shortage.

SMEs are nevertheless leading the way in creating apprenticeship opportunities, with 78% saying that they employed 1-10 apprentices. This is positive and demonstrates the long-term view that SMEs take, but the reality is that this may be driven by necessity in an age of declining numbers of skilled workers relative to capacity.

**Going beyond**

Sean Egan, the company’s Managing Director explained: “We bring our senior managers with us but use local subcontractors and suppliers, and source our labour force through a local agency. We applied these same principles throughout our work on Fairfield Pools and Leisure Centre in Dartford and Tiger Primary School in Maidstone, which has enabled us to go beyond simply giving back to the local community and be a real asset to the local economy as well.”

The figures are impressive. On the Fairfield project alone, DES Electrical spent over £57,000 on local labour, around £156,000 with local subcontractors and about £99,000 on materials from various local suppliers. They also spent £25,000 on local accommodation and nearly £7,000 in local shops and restaurants.

Also CMB Engineering based in Wales has contributed to the local economy. “We’ve been working in a wide geographic area since the recession and the opportunity to work on a range of projects in Kent, including schools, has enabled us to open a satellite office in Maidstone”, said Matthew Clarke, the company’s Regional Managing Director.

“We’ve employed about eight local people for the sites, we’re recruiting two more for the office and we anticipate further local recruitment in the near future as well as offering an apprenticeship.”

The firm’s input into the area has also included sourcing supplies from local companies and branches, employing local subcontractors, and using local accommodation and amenities. “We’ve had up to 16 rooms booked at local hotels for the best part of the last two years and we’ve rented several houses for the same period”, said Matthew. “We all shop and eat out locally too.”

Matthew Clarke Regional Managing Director CMB Engineering

“We’ve been working in a wide geographic area since the recession and the opportunity to work on a range of projects in Kent, including three schools, has enabled us to open a satellite office in Maidstone”
Conclusion
Resolutions for the Public Sector and the Supply Chain

In order for the public sector supply chain to deliver projects within strict financial constraints and also simulate local economic growth, this report proposes the following recommendations:

Greater forward visibility of project pipelines to support SMEs
SME engagement is vital in generating long term financial security in the UK. While the complexity of contracts, high capital investment and risk profiles create a challenging environment for SMEs, our survey has shown that if tenders were made public more than 18 months in advance it would allow SMEs the time to plan ahead, form partnerships and increase the likelihood of a successful bid. It would also allow for more stable employment patterns, resulting in increased stability in the pricing of contracts across the whole construction industry.

Frameworks offer some visibility ahead of time, and Scape’s framework partners have demonstrated that good supply chain management can provide a healthy and manageable pipeline for SMEs in particular, allowing them to grow their businesses in a sustainable way.

Greater collaboration between the public sector and supply chain
Greater public sector engagement with suppliers, especially SMEs, will create a stronger supply chain and support efficient delivery. However, our survey has highlighted the current mismatch between what the public sector believes to be important and what the industry believes is necessary. The public sector values local investment and social value, but the industry is more concerned with stability and pipelines of work.

Consistent and forward looking communications through digital means or open access meet the buyer events will be critical inputs in addressing this situation. It should be a priority for framework managers in the public sector to effectively measure their engagement with SMEs and this is one of Scape’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across its frameworks. Over the past ten years, Scape has engaged with over 36,000 SMEs.

More support for SMEs and the public sector on skills
Throughout the survey, the skills shortage resonated as one of the most serious barriers to growth and efficiency within the construction industry. While there has been a drive to increase the number of apprenticeships, more needs to be done. We also need to address the gender gap within the industry which is acutely pronounced. Both the public and private sectors have a responsibility to ensure that men and women from a diverse range of backgrounds are aware of the career opportunities across the construction industry through doubling their communications efforts and deploying well-constructed education programmes.

The importance of local spend and social value must be communicated
The public sector, by its very nature, must deliver greater social value through its supply chain and this is balanced alongside the increasing pressure to deliver savings and achieve more with less. The supply chain is the vehicle through which the public sector can deliver this extra value and there are greater opportunities for those who understand this key aspiration.

However, our survey has shown the public sector needs to clearly communicate the value of local spend and present tangible results which suppliers can relate to.

Addressing the skills shortage of the future, today
It is vital that we ensure the safety of the community when construction works are underway.

Gorse Covert School in Warrington welcomed Kevin Hutchinson from our Civil Engineering and Infrastructure partners Balfour Beatty, to conduct a safety talk and then take part in a fun learning activity. In addition to providing important safety guidance, these school visits are a great way to excite the next generation in considering construction as a potential career pathway.

https://youtu.be/x47a3SKj59c

“This valuable report thoroughly explores the relationship between the private and public sectors and how joining things up can bring about significant change. It clearly demonstrates the need to prioritise skills and social value as sustainable outcomes from construction and infrastructure programmes and makes recommendations for removing some of the existing barriers facing the industry.”

Christine Townley
Construction Youth Trust
A Word from the Industry

“This report lays bare the challenges, but also the opportunities, for both the public sector and the industry. Stability and sustainability are absolutely vital for both sides of the supply chain equation, and collaboration is key to achieving them. Now the priority must be to push ahead with measures that will drive change – greater engagement, increased education and more long-term planning to boost local economies and deliver for communities.”

Mark Robinson, Scape Group, Chief Executive

“I am extremely proud of Willmott Dixon’s achievements through our partnership with Scape; our shared values have allowed us to focus not only on offering efficient and cost-effective solutions but also on adding lasting value to the local communities we work in. Our common focus on SME engagement and growth has seen us set and achieve challenging targets for local spend. We are not complacent though and will continue to set a high benchmark that I hope will inspire other companies in our sector as we all use our economic influence to drive growth in the local supply chain.”

Rick Willmott, Willmott Dixon, Group Chief Executive

“Scape’s research reveals a widespread focus on sustainable construction; that means supporting local businesses, inspiring a diverse group of talented individuals into the sector and ensuring the future demand for skilled labour is met. We are committed to delivering this as part of the Scape framework.”

Dean Banks, Balfour Beatty, Managing Director

“Since the work began, both the clients and tenants have been very pleased with how the work has progressed. So much so, that this relationship has become stronger. In the next three years of the Scape framework, we’re very excited about the next phase of this relationship. We are currently working with Carillion to develop their value added plan for clients and we’re also collaborating on a programme of work placements, mentoring and apprenticeships for young people. We are very excited about the next three years of the Scape framework.”

Stuart Currier, Managing Director, Select

Case Study

Select and the West of Scotland Housing Association

“Scape Group’s National Facilities Management framework includes Select, a multi-trade contractor, who are working with Carillion, the framework partner, to support the delivery of planned maintenance services for social housing provider, the West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA).

Over many years, Carillion and Select have forged a close working relationship as a trusted supply chain partner, sharing a dedication to delivering innovative solutions to challenges faced by public sector organisations in Scotland, including a number of leading social housing providers.

When the WSHA appointed Carillion to carry out a planned maintenance contract to improve housing stock for their tenants in Glasgow, and with just 6 weeks from initial meeting to starting on site, it was essential to have a reliable, local supply chain partner to help complete its first commission under Scape.

The works included replacement of kitchens, bathrooms and boilers to around 230 residential housing units in Glasgow. With a large team of skilled tradespeople, Select were first choice as a supply chain partner, and they were only too willing and able to respond to the challenge. Since the project began, both the clients and tenants have been very pleased with how the work has progressed. So much so, that this relationship has also helped Carillion to secure more work through Scape with the West of Scotland Housing Association.”

Peter Young, Kier, Executive Director

Peter Young, Kier, Executive Director

“This research offers important insight into the benefits of working collaboratively with local suppliers to create a long-term, sustainable supply chain. Kier is committed to working with local businesses and suppliers in the communities where we work, which spans projects nationwide from Aberdeen to Truro. Over the last five years working with Scape, we have delivered 70 percent of project spend within 40 miles of site, with almost half of our workforce living within 20 miles of our projects, clearly demonstrating our commitment to supporting the local economy and the valuable role that a key framework can play in facilitating local spend and social value.”

Peter Young, Kier, Executive Director

“Scape Procure Facilities Management
SELECT CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATES LTD
Sustainable in the Supply Chain
sustainability in the supply chain