

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **29 JANUARY 2024**

#### **Foundations in place for a competence-led built environment**

*Third report from the Competence Steering Group urges industry to embrace new standards and frameworks and sets out the Group's future.*

A new report from the Competence Steering Group (CSG), the cross-sector group charged with raising standards for those working in safety-critical occupations in the wake of the Grenfell tower fire, is urging companies and individuals to adopt new competence practices and measures for a safer built environment.

The report - *A Higher Bar - Achieving a Competence-led Built Environment* – sets out the significant steps being made across the built environment and fire sectors in improving skills, knowledge, and behaviours to drive culture change and improve the safety of buildings.

New standards, competence frameworks, accreditation procedures and learning materials have been developed by the CSG's Working Groups and taken forward by the BSI and other bodies.

The report – CSG's third - also sets out the next steps for the Group as it looks to accelerate the roll out of the new competence requirements and systems across the built environment workforce.

The CSG was established five years ago by the Industry Response Group and chaired by **Construction Industry Council (CIC) Chief Executive Graham Watts OBE** with CIC acting as the administrator. Watts said: *"We have laid the foundations of a new infrastructure for skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours. Coupled with strong legislation and enforcement, these new standards, frameworks and assessments, which have been developed by industry for industry, should help move us to a higher level.*

He added: *"There is still a long way to go. As we move into the implementation phase it is incumbent on those working in all professions and trades in life-critical disciplines to attain these higher levels of competence. Only then can we rebuild the trust of those who occupy and live in the buildings we design, construct and manage."*

The CSG milestones have included:

- **A national suite of competence standards** through BSI Flex 8670 and transition to a full British Standard.
- **PAS standards** for the **three regulated roles** (PC, PD and ***BSM***) now published as PAS 8671, PAS 8672 and PAS 8673.
- Approvement in principle for **further PAS Standards (Construction Products and Fire Risk Assessors)** and a new standard **BSAS 01:2023 Organisation Capability Management System Standard** – Managing Competence.
- **Framework of Competence Standards** providing specific requirements for individual disciplines. All WGs have developed complete or partial competency frameworks.
- Working Groups and their associated professional trade bodies have published 30 guides across the various Working Groups and key information.
- Arrangements for **independent assessment and reassessment** against the competence standards.
- Establishment of the **Building Safety Alliance**.
- **Development of Safety Case/Safety Management Systems**

The CSG has been instrumental in shaping government policy, including securing the setting up of the Industry Competence Committee within the Building Safety Regulator and making it a requirement within the Building Safety Act for dutyholders to employ competent people.

Going forward, the CSG is to become an independent sub-group of the Building Safety Regulator's Industry Competence Committee and will be renamed as the Industry Competence Steering Committee (ICSG).

Hanna Clarke, Digital and Policy Manager at the Construction Products Association and Chair of the CSG's Working Group 12 covering construction product competence, takes over from Graham Watts as Chair. Gill Hancock, Head of Qualifications and Standards at the Association for Project Management and chair of Working Group 10 – Project Managers, is to become the ICSG's Deputy Chair.

**Incoming Chair of the ICSG Hanna Clarke commented:** *"CSG broke ground in bringing so many siloed sectors together in unprecedented collaboration. ICSG's task will be to build on this, bringing in more disciplines and stakeholders and increasing our engagement and visibility."*

Clarke added: *"The new relationship with the Industry Competence Committee and the Building Safety Regulator will provide an excellent opportunity for the Group to test its work against critical friends."*



*Ultimately the aim is to establish a new culture so that every member of the supply chain - from designers to maintenance contractors - demonstrates competence in working safely."*

**Jon Vanstone, Chair of the Industry Competence Committee** welcomed the report: *"'A Higher Bar', is a pivotal step in advancing building safety standards. It sets a new benchmark in competence for the construction industry, aligning with the critical directives of the Hackitt Review and the Building Safety Act.*

*Vanstone added: "The report represents a collective commitment to elevating safety through enhanced skills, knowledge, and behaviour standards across all sectors. We are at a transformative juncture, and 'A Higher Bar' is a blueprint for a safer and more responsible future in building practices. I would like to congratulate all involved with its production under the effective leadership of Graham."*

A Higher Bar can be downloaded [here](#) for free, hard copies can be pre-ordered [here](#).

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Notes to the editor

The CSG represents more than 150 organisations in the fire and construction industries. It has previously published *Setting the Bar* in 2020 following an Interim Report *Raising the Bar*, published in August 2019. The work was initiated by the recommendations in Dame Judith Hackitt's review *Building a Safer Future*.

The Working Groups established by and reporting into the Competence Steering Group were as follows:

- Overarching Competence Body (WG0)
- Engineers (WG1)
- Installers (WG2)
- Fire engineers (WG3)
- Fire risk assessors (WG4)
- Fire safety enforcing officers (WG5)
- Building standards professionals (WG6)
- Building designers, including architects (WG7)
- Building safety managers (WG8)
- Site supervisors (WG9)
- Project managers (WG10)
- Procurement professionals (WG11)
- Construction products competence (WG12)

The Competence Steering Group (CSG) was set up under the auspices of the Industry Response Group, established in the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell fire in June 2017 jointly by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Build UK, Construction Industry Council and Construction Products Association and the National Fire Chiefs' Council.

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