

Careers in the Northern Ireland Construction Industry



Construction - What is it?

The construction industry covers the design, construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure projects such as bridges, roads, tunnels, waterways, etc.

Construction boasts a wide variety of careers including skilled trades, IT, marketing, project management, design and much more.

Construction needs people with creative, technical, management and practical skills.

Whatever your role is in the industry, if it's as a bricklayer or plasterer, civil engineer, architect or construction manager, every team member is as important as the next. So whatever your talent is, you can be sure there's a career in construction for you.

Choose a career in construction and you won't be starting out on your own. You'll be joining a team of specialist people all working together to build a strong, long-lasting future. Join one of Northern Ireland's largest industries and you'll have chosen a career that's challenging, exciting and rewarding.

What do I need?

There are many ways you can get into construction, and the industry welcomes everyone from newcomers to people with some experience to career changers.

The skills and qualifications needed vary by occupation and range from apprenticeships and NVQs to HNDs, degrees and professional qualifications.

The majority of trades require a minimum NVQ Level 2 or above and professional occupations usually require a degree level qualification or equivalent.

Whether you go to college, learn on site, or go to university you'll obtain specialist training for your chosen career.

Your career in any area in construction will require commitment and enthusiasm.

Contact your local training provider, further education college or university for course information and entry criteria.

What are the Opportunities?

The outlook for most of the economy across the UK looks much more positive as confidence rises amid a successful vaccine rollout, declining Covid-19 infection rates and the government continuing to follow its 'roadmap' out of lockdown' that involves return to some normality.

The construction industry is expecting growth over the coming months because of resumption of works that were paused during lockdown restrictions and an expected rise in sales as the economy continues to reopen. Even with the rising difficulties in obtaining materials, import tariffs and depressed sterling rates, the outlook for construction in Northern Ireland is positive. According to the latest Construction Skills Network Labour Market Intelligence Report¹ the construction workforce is forecast to increase by an additional 5,000 extra workers which will be needed between the end of 2020 and 2025. This means the construction industry must increase current recruitment by 1,000 new workers each year to deliver the expected work over this period.

The demand for these extra workers is projected to be greatest for wood trades and interior fit out, electrical trades and installation, plumbing and HVAC trades and labourers. However, there will still be reasonable demand for painters and decorators, plant mechanics/fitters, floorers and building envelope specialists.

In terms of the professional and technical occupations demand is strongest for roles in areas such as civil engineering and other construction professionals and technical staff such as quantity surveyors and architects.

There is also strong demand for occupations in non-construction professional, technical, IT and other office based staff in areas such as finance, marketing and administration.

Future Skills

In terms of future skills for the industry there are 13,700 new job opportunities expected to be created to deliver the Government's Green/Net Zero Carbon Strategy by 2050 according to the Energy Strategy for NI consultation paper. Typical job roles and skills include energy assessors, carbon management specialists, smart meter installers, resilience planners, green finance experts and low carbon transport officers. A need for technological skills in areas such as digitalisation, analytics, power engineering, storage, artificial intelligence and environmental sciences will also be required.²

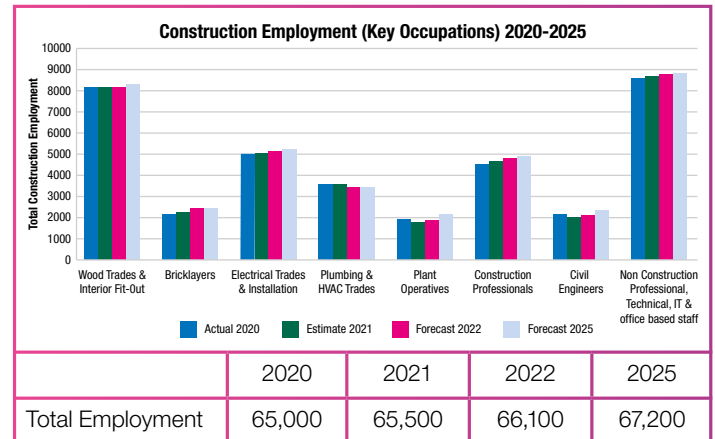
In relation to emerging technology in construction, skills will be needed in Building Information Modelling (BIM), drone usage, augmented reality/virtual reality, data analysis, software development, technology maintenance and project management. Most construction workers will need to develop a higher standard of IT literacy³.

Northern Ireland companies continue to win work both in the rest of the UK and in the Republic of Ireland increasing the need for a mobile workforce. Therefore, new entrants into the industry should be prepared to travel.

Construction Output

2020 was a challenging year for construction in Northern Ireland with the annual output dropping by around 12% when compared to 2019, a strong pick up of construction work in late 2020 is leading towards a steady recovery in output in 2021. Northern Ireland is projected to average an output growth of 3.9% a year over the 2021-2025 period driven by private housing growth and it is estimated that the industry's output will achieve its pre-Covid-19 levels in 2023.

This leads to an annual recruitment requirement of 1,000 for the same period and by 2025 employment is projected to be around 67,200 workers, up from 65,000 at the end of 2020.



Things to Consider

Working in construction you will:

- Make a real difference to the environment from city regeneration to ensuring essential facilities are available.
- Have access to a huge range of training and respected professional qualifications at all levels.
- Have opportunities to progress and travel and work throughout the UK, Ireland and further afield.
- Work in an environment that is constantly changing – you may spend some time working in the office and some time working outdoors.
- Obtain job satisfaction knowing that you helped build something that will last a lifetime or longer.
- Have the potential to become self-employed in your chosen occupation.

What are the Wages?

	Average Annual Gross Pay ⁴
Quantity Surveyor	£33,096
Architect	£47,189
Civil Engineer	£36,383
Joiner	£26,576
Plant Operator	£30,399
Painter & Decorator	£27,213

Above information correct at time of print.

What to do Next

Click on the following links for further information:

www.citbni.org.uk/careers.aspx

For more information on careers within the Northern Ireland construction industry.

www.goconstruct.org

'Go Construct' offers UK wide advice to people considering a career in the industry.

If you need help on choosing a career, going to college or university, training opportunities, or finding a job, contact the careers service:

Online: www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers

Telephone: 0300 200 7820

The Construction industry presents work that is full of diversity and challenges; with the changing face of construction, it's a great time to be able to make a contribution. What you get out of a career depends on you.

A day in the life of Diarmuid Mullan Site Manager, Heron Bros

How did you get into the construction industry?

My whole family is in construction and I always knew that I wanted to work with my hands. From a young age I would go out on site with my dad and I could not wait until the weekend or evenings so I could get out with my dad. I left school at 16 and became an apprentice joiner. I worked my way up over the years to become a foreman and then a Site Manager. I have always enjoyed working in the construction industry.

What does your job entail on a day to day basis?

As a site manager my job is very busy.

7:00am It is an early start for me on site. I sign in and put on the correct PPE and take a walk around the site to complete a early morning inspection before the work begins.

8:00am I call together the workforce for a site meeting. This includes a Toolbox Talk and safety briefing to ensure everyone understands what they are doing today. Any potential risks or dangers are discussed at the meeting to ensure that everyone will be safe on site.

9:00am It's time to answer my emails and make any necessary phone calls. I also stop by to check on the apprentice to make sure they have everything they need and check if they have any questions about the work.

10:30am I meet with local neighbours to keep them informed of progress and answer any queries or complaints. It is great to engage with local residents and build good relationships.

12:00pm I am back on site and carry out a perimeter check to ensure that the outside is clean and tidy. I also make sure that environmental factors are covered, such as waste material being correctly recycled and wildlife looked after. Once I am happy with this I eat a healthy snack from the canteen.

3:00pm As there is a new trade contractor starting, I have a short meeting to give them all the information that they need and show them around as part of their initial induction.

4:30pm I return to the site office to check emails, make phone calls and update my 'to-do' list. I also prepare my presentation and fun packs for the visit to the local school, which is taking place tomorrow.

5:30pm I carry out my final walk around site with the team and discuss any issues that occurred during the day and talk about how these were resolved. This keeps me updated with everything that happens on site. It also means that I have good working relationships with my workforce.

6:00pm It is the end of the day and I ensure that the site is secure for the night and hand over to the security guard. I then sign out and remove my PPE before going home.

What are the good and bad aspects of your job?

I get to build brand new buildings from start to finish and leave a positive legacy in the communities I work in. Working on a construction site can be tough when the weather is wet.

What skills do you need in your line of work and how have your employers helped develop these skills?

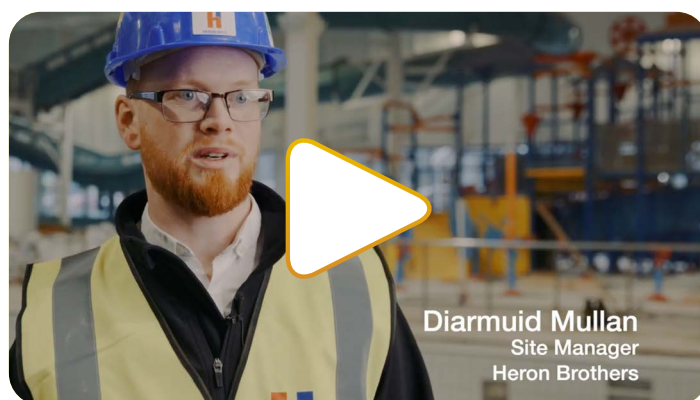
You need to have

- Methodical way of thinking
- Good knowledge of construction
- Good financial & numeracy management
- Excellent problem solving, communication and negotiating skills
- The ability to absorb complex information & assess requirements readily
- Computer literate

What advice would you give to young people considering a career in construction?

Construction is a career like no other career. I have always enjoyed working in the construction industry as every day is different and brings me new challenges. It has allowed me to travel the world and work on some very special projects!

Click on the video below to hear more about Diarmuid's journey in construction or log on to <https://bit.ly/3zM2s2j> to view.



Eilis Blee – My role as a Trainee Estimator with Gilbert Ash

How did you get into the construction industry?

I have always had an interest in the construction industry from a young age as my father was a bricklayer and contractor. I enrolled myself on an Ulster University Foundation Degree course with The South West College in Omagh. This course was a part time Higher Level Apprenticeship Foundation Degree meaning to complete the course I would need to find employment within the Construction Industry. Fortunately, I was offered a role within Gilbert-Ash as a Trainee Estimator and for the past 2 and a half years I have been working and learning side by side with a team of Estimators. I am currently in the final stages of completing a Bsc Hon Degree in Construction Engineering and Management with Open University.

What does your job entail on a day to day basis?

I work as part of a team within a close-knit Estimating Department. As a student my knowledge of estimating was limited so there was much to learn on joining Gilbert-Ash. On a daily basis, I assist my co-workers on completing tenders; this can take many forms from simply printing, organising and checking the documents for each project, to creating and sending out enquiries for Tenders.

What are the good and bad aspects of your job?

Working in estimating I have learned to appreciate how much work goes into tenders and projects long before they reach a site. I get the opportunity to see the project completely dissected, from substructure to the finishes in the process of pricing. As a main contractor the average budget on the tenders we receive is £20 Million, and no two tenders are the same, so I assist on a wide variety of tenders ranging across Hotels, Educational Buildings, Offices, Theatres, Museums and many more which keeps the job very interesting.

What skills do you need in your line of work and how have your employers helped develop these skills?

In estimating I would say one of the most important skills to have is good time management. Meeting deadlines is critical, and this can be overwhelming if you are not prepared and organised. Each member of the Gilbert-Ash Estimating team may have their own different style on how they approach a tender but they have all taught me that prioritising each element is necessary, for example the larger packages need to be sent to Sub-Contractors promptly to ensure they have enough time to give an accurate quotation. Another essential skill to have is good communication and people skills. The role of an Estimator means you are in contact with many

people from Architects to Quantity Surveyors to Sub-Contractors, learning how to work collaboratively with everyone involved makes the process run smoother. Developing this skill comes with time and experience, and the more responsibility I am given the more I am developing this skill with confidence. I have also been given the opportunity to develop my IT skills in estimating software, I can now confidently and efficiently use the Company's Conquest system which is a great benefit.

What advice would you give to young people considering a career in construction?

My advice would be to take the HLA route, I have found it to be a real benefit to me. What you learn through a course is very relevant and necessary but being involved in the industry while learning is invaluable. It gives you the opportunity to complete real live tasks relevant to the area of study while helping to focus you on achieving your qualification. It also opens you up to the broader construction industry and the many career options available, so being an Apprentice gives you time to explore these and see which is the best fit for you. From a financial viewpoint it also has many benefits as you will be 'earning while you are learning' and on occasion the fees from your course can be supported through Government training schemes.

To hear more about Eilis' role **click on the video below** or log on to <https://bit.ly/3DkG7LN>



Did you Know?

1. By 2025 the UK construction industry workforce will reach 2.84 million.
2. There are over 170 roles in construction to choose from and exciting new roles are continually emerging with the introduction of new technologies.
3. Women are under-represented in construction, particularly within the trade occupations.
4. There is a GCSE in Construction & the Built Environment which is currently offered in over 45 schools in Northern Ireland. Some schools offer a BTEC qualification in Construction.
5. There are careers in built heritage, sustainable construction and film and television set construction.
6. Many Construction Managers and other professionals started their careers as apprentices.

Total Workforce by Occupation - Northern Ireland

	Actual	Estimate	Forecast	
	2020	2021	2022	2025
Senior, executive and business process managers	3,400	3,400	3,400	3,300
Construction Project Managers	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
Other construction process managers	4,800	4,700	4,700	4,700
Non-construction professional, technical, IT and other office based staff	8,600	8,700	8,800	8,900
Construction Trades Supervisors	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,100
Wood trades and interior fit-out	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,300
Bricklayers	2,100	2,200	2,300	2,300
Building envelope specialists	1,100	1,100	1,200	1,200
Painters and decorators	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200
Plasterers	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700
Roofers	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,000
Floorers	300	300	300	300
Glaziers	600	600	600	600
Specialist building operatives nec*	900	800	800	800
Scaffolders	200	200	200	200
Plant operatives	1,900	1,800	1,900	2,100
Plant mechanics/fitters	900	900	900	900
Steel erectors/structural fabrication	200	200	200	200
Labourers nec*	4,200	4,200	4,300	4,400
Electrical trades and installation	5,000	5,000	5,100	5,200
Plumbing and HVAC Trades	3,500	3,500	3,400	3,400
Logistics	500	500	500	500
Civil engineering operatives nec*	400	400	400	400
Non construction operatives	300	300	400	400
Total (SIC 41-43)	56,000	56,100	56,500	57,100
Civil engineers	2,100	2,000	2,100	2,300
Other construction professionals and technical staff	4,500	4,700	4,800	4,900
Architects	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,700
Surveyors	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,200
Total (SIC 41-43, 71.1, 74.9)	65,000	65,500	66,100	67,200

Source: ONS, CSN, Experian

Reference: CSN Explained, Section 4, Notes 5 and 6

*Not elsewhere classified

Data Sources

- 1 Construction Skills Network Labour Market Intelligence Report – 5 Year Outlook 2021-2025 for Northern Ireland
<https://bit.ly/2UftyzG>
- 2 Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland Consultation on Policy Options, March 2021
<https://bit.ly/3hgYV4C>
- 3 A Challenge and an Opportunity: Artificial Intelligence and Automation in the Construction Industry, CITB GB, January 2021
<https://bit.ly/2ThZdj1>
- 4 What are the wages:
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<https://www.adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/northern-ireland/architect>
<https://www.adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/northern-ireland/civil-engineer>
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<https://www.checkasalary.co.uk/salary/painter-and-decorator-northern-ireland>

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