



Consultation Response

Britain in the World: Labour's progressive trade policy

Response by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).



Introduction

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is pleased to respond to this Call for Evidence by the Labour Party.

Established in 1868, RICS is the largest organisation of its kind for professionals in property, construction, land, and related environmental issues, setting and upholding professional standards for 125,000 qualified professionals and over 10,000 firms. RICS regulates both its individual qualified professionals and those firms that have registered for regulation by RICS.

Over 80,000 of our qualified professionals work in the UK, where our goal is to deliver a healthy and vibrant property and land sector as a key pillar of a thriving economy while addressing the need for the creation of green, safe communities.

We are not a trade body; we do not represent any sectional interest, and under the terms of our Royal Charter the advice and leadership we offer is always in the public interest.

Consultation response

1. What is the role of international trade in promoting domestic economic growth, boosting jobs and driving up wages?

The UK is a world-leader when it comes to property and construction advice, and as globalisation continues, the demand for UK qualified and experienced professionals abroad has risen dramatically.

The chartered surveying profession is a key source of UK competitive advantage and reputation on the global stage. RICS professionals and RICS' internationally renowned standards will play a key role in attracting investment into UK infrastructure. Our members, RICS accredited professionals, develop and manage high quality, high value infrastructure fit for the future. We play a key role in ensuring value, quality and cost and carbon management, as well as managing global pressures and ensuring ethical standards. This is evidenced through our publication of [The Red Book](#), a commitment to promote and support high standards in valuation delivery worldwide.

To support the promotion of domestic economic growth, boost jobs and drive-up wages. The wider profession will work with government to:

- Drive investment in UK business and professionals and unlock foreign direct investment into real estate and infrastructure across the whole of the UK;
- Disseminate world-leading expertise in the development of high-quality, high-value, sustainable infrastructure; and
- Ensure professional standards, improved outcomes and value in development projects across the wider globe.

2. How can Labour ensure the UK's international trade policy promotes growth and investment across the nations and regions of the UK?

Promoting growth and investment across the nations and regions of the UK should be a central aim of any future trade deal. Labour should implement strategies to attract inward foreign investment beyond London and the South East, as well as support for the

development of structural plans for cities that are country-wide, rather than city-wide, and which are coordinated strategically from a national point of view as part of a connected ecosystem.

One area where this could be achieved is through the widespread adoption of benchmarking practices. Benchmarking involves using data from other projects to better inform project development and decision making throughout a project's lifecycle, this is particularly pertinent when considering projects across the built environment, but effective benchmarking is also important in minimising unwarranted variation nationally, and regionally too, by highlighting what works well and can be exported to other regions and nations, and what could be improved.

As such, we believe Labour should look to export the rigorous benchmarking standards and programmes that have already been developed across the UK, while ensuring that this is built into any future trade deals.

This is an area where we have sought to effect change across the built environment. For example, our 2022 [Sustainability Report](#) found that a substantial proportion of contributors (around 50%) to our survey, identified lack of established standards, tools, databases, benchmarks and guidance as one of the key obstacles to effectively reducing carbon emissions.

To address this need, the RICS alongside other professional bodies and industry experts have developed a suite of sustainability programmes with the aim of tracking and limiting carbon – both embodied and emitted – in the built environment. This will be expanded upon in our response to question four.

In addition, recognition of innovative policy work undertaken across the UK must be factored into the UK's international trade policy. For example across the built environment, there are a number of key programmes, such as [ARBED 3](#) in Wales, and the incorporation of the principles of the [Just Transition](#) into law in Scotland. This policy work can be learned from and exported, not just across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but also to the wider international community.

3. How can Labour build resilience into the international trade system and better ensure the security of essential supply chains?

As we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, supply chains of all varieties are vulnerable to external shocks, and the built environment sector was no different. This ultimately effects the productivity, output and financial stability of the industry.

Construction supply chains have evolved over many years, adopting the efficient management systems seen in the manufacturing and production sectors. This 'just-in-time' approach requires a highly responsive supply chain that reduces lead times and levels of inventory held, optimising production and reducing costs.

Understanding the resilience of the supply chain can benefit both customers and suppliers by identifying potential risk and helping prevent failure, expedite recovery and enhance performance in the longer term.

Quantity surveyors and project managers have interesting and important roles to play in creating more resilient supply chains. Our members make key decisions in the development life cycle, are responsible for managing a wide range of risk and develop long-term, collaborative relationships with suppliers.

Long-term resilience building and improvement requires a process of monitoring, progress reporting and learning development. This process of developing resilience should involve continuous engagement, assessment development, capacity building and learning, so that resilience becomes embedded in the culture of an organisation and forms the basis of strategic decisions. These lessons can be extended to future trade deals to ensure that the UK's supply chains remain resilient.

4. How will a Labour government's trade policy reduce poverty and global inequality whilst promoting (a) human rights, (b) workers' rights, (c) fair trade and (d) global peace and security?

No response.

5. How can Labour use trade policy to deliver environmental protection and help drive the world to net zero?

The built environment contributes to 43% of all greenhouse gas emissions, making reductions within the industry vital for achieving net zero, but it also places the sector at the

forefront of the UK's net zero ambitions. Imbedding sustainability into trade policy is one aspect of achieving this aim.

As we outlined in our response to question two, our own research has highlighted that a lack of established standards, tools, databases, benchmarks and guidance is a key obstacle to effectively reducing carbon emissions in the built environment.

Working alongside industry partners, RICS has developed a suite of standards that will enable the measurement, reporting and benchmarking of carbon in the built environment. This will allow us to track all carbon emissions from the production of materials, construction process, use and the disposal of built assets over their entire life cycle.

- [International Cost Management Standard \(ICMS\)](#): ICMS3 will support the transition to net zero by enabling the accurate reporting, benchmarking and comparison of carbon and cost in construction.
- [Whole Life \(Lifecycle\) Carbon Assessment](#): A mandatory professional statement, setting out how to consider embodied and operational carbon within built environment projects.
- [Built Environment Carbon Database](#): A free resource that allows users to identify where carbon reductions can be made a building's lifecycle. It will be the main source of carbon estimating for the construction sector in Scotland.

Sustainability must be embedded within our future trade deals, and ensuring robust benchmarking for embodied carbon internationally is just one aspect of this.

Further information on RICS' sustainability initiatives can be found [here](#), including RICS' leading [Sustainability Report](#) into the commercial property market.

6. What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?

Historically, protected characteristics have not featured heavily within trade policy. Nevertheless, inclusivity should still be built into future trade deals. In doing so, this may enable the reinvigoration of many sectors, the built environment included, opening-up more jobs in this sector for those not traditionally represented in this industry. The built environment currently lacks representation from the protected characteristics and those from certain socio-economic backgrounds, therefore targeted recruitment would be useful

to increase diversity as well as an investment in providing individuals with the skills they need. Opportunities to create diverse workforces should be embraced and not ignored.

The RICS have called for more diversity in this sector. Key membership bodies in the built environment sector have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to drive forward the creation of a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector - ensuring it is more representative of the society it serves. You can find the document [here](#).

7. What consideration would need to be given to policy proposals in this area when collaborating with devolved administrations and local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Please see our response to question two.

Contact details

Robert Toomey MSc

Senior Public Affairs Officer, Scotland

E: rttoomey@rics.org