

SEC *focus* GROUP

Voice of the Specialist Engineering Contractor

The members of the
SEC Group are:

Association of
Plumbing and Heating
Contractors

British Constructional
Steelwork Association

Electrical Contractors'
Association

Heating and Ventilating
Contractors'
Association

Lift and Escalator
Industry Association

SELECT

AN **ELECTION** AGENDA

The mission of the Specialist Engineering Contractors Group is to promote an efficient and profitable specialist engineering sector, comprising qualified firms and a skilled workforce, able to meet the business needs of its clients through delivering high-quality engineering systems, services, products and structures as part of integrated supply teams.

Against this background we want to see all political parties:

- Commit to **Security of Payment** in the construction industry. This would involve the development of payment mechanisms (such as project bank accounts) in public sector procurement that foster team working and promote a culture of trust. Furthermore;
 - A commitment to make more effective the payment provisions in the Construction Act.
 - All public sector procurers to ensure fair payment practices within supply chains.
 - Changes to insolvency legislation that will allow greater protection for SMEs from upstream insolvencies.

- Promote **Corporate Competence** through recognising reputable qualification schemes already existing in the industry. The industry should only comprise qualified firms and employees with evidence of their potential to achieve the necessary quality and their ability to minimise risks associated with health and safety. Furthermore all parties to rationalise the regulatory framework on the competence of firms and reduce the myriad vetting and qualification procedures.



- Give a higher priority to **Small Businesses**. We recommend that the portfolio for Small Businesses should rest with the Treasury. For example, a Minister for Small Businesses should be a Treasury Ministerial appointment who reports direct to the Chief Secretary. Consequently the Chief Secretary would present the case for Small Businesses at Cabinet.

- Ensure that no **new legislation in the field of employment** is introduced if it will have a serious detrimental impact on construction businesses. The assessment to be subject to independent scrutiny.

- Place a high priority on **training and retraining** so that we have a workforce that is well equipped with the required skills to meet the needs of the future. The construction industry is committed to a fully qualified workforce by 2010 and we seek continued endorsement of Government to achieve this target.
- Give an assurance that '**best value**' procurement will be required of all public sector clients, taking into account 'whole life costs.' This should be achieved by the introduction of fiscal incentives throughout public sector procurement to encourage all procurers to adopt best practice in construction procurement.
- Provide a commitment to review and simplify the administrative requirements surrounding the **Private Finance Initiative and Public Private Partnerships**.

- Reduce **VAT** on domestic repair and maintenance to 5% to encourage improvements to private sector housing. Such a measure would help deduce the price differential between bona fide contractors and the 'rogue trader' minority in the industry. A reduced VAT rate would dampen the incentive to join (or remain in) the 'black economy'.

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- Promote the use of **Project Insurance** in public sector construction procurement. The aim being to reduce the waste to the taxpayer associated with multiple insurance policies for construction and to encourage greater integration of the construction process to ensure best value.