



Annual Review 2021

Improving standards
and safety on UK
construction sites



Chair's Introduction

A warm welcome to the CSCS Annual Review 2021. I am pleased to report strong progress continues to be made, despite the ongoing pandemic.



Carolyn Uphill, Chairman

Card sales have returned to pre-pandemic levels but the COVID-19 picture remains a challenging and unclear one. CSCS has not been immune from the difficulties caused by the pandemic but, like many other organisations, it has provided a catalyst for us to fully leverage digital-first operations and work in a swifter, more efficient way.

As this review will outline, the online application process, which we fully launched in 2020, and the accompanying My CSCS app has significantly sped up the application process. This has made the process of applying for a card much easier and applicants are now enjoying the benefits of a service that is open 24 hours a day, all year round.

The online service has resulted in a reduction in calls to the contact centre, allowing our representatives to focus on providing quality support to fewer callers, while the wait times for calls now average less than 20 seconds.

Technology must remain a key focus for CSCS over the coming years both in terms of continually improving our application service to meet the needs of the industry and tackling those who attempt to obtain their cards fraudulently.

This review will go into more detail about some of the initiatives we have planned to ensure all cards are checked and those trying to cheat the application system are identified and action is taken. In addition to this technology, it's imperative that the message of 'check, check and check again' becomes gospel among the industry and on construction sites so that every card holder is qualified for the job they do on site.

We've seen changes internally also, specifically among the CSCS board. I want to take this opportunity to thank those who have moved on from their role on the board while also giving a warm welcome to our latest member.

Steve Kemp has stepped down from his position on the CSCS board after two years of dedicated work. Replacing Steve is Charlotte Childs - GMB National Officer for Construction and Construction Engineering and also Chair of the Multi-union National Engineering and Construction Committee.

Charlotte brings a wealth of experience in the industry and I look forward to working alongside her and the rest of the Board over the coming 12 months.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the remainder of the board for their continued hard work and of course our industry stakeholders for their continued support and collaboration.

Thank you also to the CSCS executive team for their efforts and dedication this year. The positive results we're seeing in terms of application times and efficiency savings are testament to their hard work.

The CSCS Board and I look forward to 2022 when we will continue to further strengthen the scheme and move the industry closer towards a fully trained and qualified workforce.

Carolyn Uphill, Chairman

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Governance

CSCS is owned by the construction industry for the construction industry.

CSCS is a not for profit organisation which is registered as a company limited by guarantee and has no shareholders.

CSCS is owned by three employer organisations and two unions representing the breadth of the construction industry.

CSCS is managed by CSCS Limited whose seven non-executive Directors are nominated from the following owner organisations:

- Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA)
- Federation of Master Builders (FMB)
- GMB Union
- Build UK
- UNITE the Union

Also represented on the Board, but not nominated by the owner organisations, are two independent non-executive Directors nominated by:

- The Construction Clients Group (CCG)
- The Construction Industry Council (CIC)

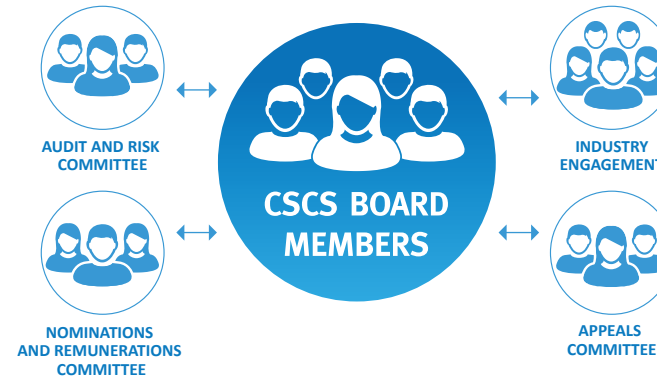
The Chairman provides leadership to the Board and is appointed by the Board members.

CSCS Board Director responsibilities include:

- Management of the scheme, providing leadership and setting CSCS's strategic direction and policies
- Ensuring the necessary resources are available to meet CSCS's objectives and review performance
- Participation in a number of key committees which ensure appropriate governance of the scheme.

The CSCS Board also works with other card schemes and organisations not represented on the CSCS Board to share ideas that help drive the scheme forward to meet the wider needs of industry.

CSCS has a Chief Executive and a small directly employed team based in London responsible for running the scheme.



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Board Directors



Carolyn Uphill
Independent Chairman

Carolyn has 30 years' experience running a Construction Equipment Manufacturing, Sales and Plant Hire Company. She has also chaired a leading Trade Association whose stated objectives are to improve standards and encourage training towards accreditation.



Jerry Swain
Unite the Union

Jerry joined the Board in 2017 following the merger of Unite and UCATT. Unite has around 50,000 members in building, construction and allied trades.



Kevin Bennett
Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA)

Kevin joined the Board in 2010. CECA members deliver, upgrade and maintain the country's infrastructure. Its members carry out around 75% of all civil engineering activity across the UK.



John Allott
Unite the Union

John joined the Board in 2010. Unite has around 50,000 members in building, construction and allied trades.



David Barnes
Federation of Master Builders (FMB)

David joined the Board in 2015. The FMB represents the interests of small and medium sized building firms across the UK. The FMB is the largest trade association in the building industry representing over 9,000 companies.



Suzannah Nichol
Build UK

Suzannah Nichol is the Chief Executive of Build UK and joined the Board of CSCS in 2008. Build UK is the leading representative organisation for the UK construction industry bringing together Clients, Main Contractors, Trade Associations and other organisations committed to industry collaboration.



Charlotte Childs
GMB Union (GMB)

Charlotte joined the board in 2021. GMB is a general trade union with over 630,000 members, of which many work in the construction sector.



Steve Beechey
Build UK

Stephen Beechey is Group Public Sector Director at the Wates Group which is a Contractor Member of Build UK, and he joined the Board of CSCS in 2020. Build UK is the leading representative organisation for the UK construction industry bringing together Clients, Main Contractors, Trade Associations and other organisations committed to industry collaboration.



David Watson
Construction Industry Council (CIC)

David joined the Board in 2010. CIC represents professional bodies, research organisations and specialist business associations. Its members include 500,000 individual professionals and 25,000 firms of construction consultants.



Gren Tipper
Construction Clients Group (CCG)

Gren joined the Board in 2006. The CCG works to improve value for money and best practice on construction projects. Its members include government and organisations across a wide range of sectors.

Highlights and Accomplishments

Strong results from the improved online application process, the launch of the Industry Placement card and the forming of the CSCS Alliance were just some of the highlights from the past year.

COVID-19

Coronavirus remains something of an uncertainty in the long-term, but CSCS has managed to navigate the worst impacts of the pandemic to date, the most challenging of which was disruption to the CITB Health, safety and environment test centres across the UK.

That disruption has since eased and we now offer an improved online service for the industry. The online service has allowed greater flexibility for those applying for, or renewing, a CSCS card while we also kept our grace period extension for card renewals in place throughout 2021 – deferring renewals from six months after the card expires to 12 months.

CSCS will continue to monitor the situation together with government guidance, with a view to updating the scheme rules where required.

Service levels

As part of the new online service, application processing times have significantly reduced. Applications are now being processed within 24 to 48 hours, compared to a period of more than 20 days prior to the online system being introduced in late 2019.

With faster processing times we have seen a 50 per cent reduction in calls as well as shorter waiting times for calls to be answered. The wait times for calls averages less than 20 seconds.

My CSCS app and virtual cards

In addition to the online service, the My CSCS app has gone from strength to strength during 2021. Launched in December 2020 to store virtual cards, the app was upgraded in the summer to enable card applications to be made from My CSCS.

Using the app has many other benefits, with card holders able to view the status of their applications, manage their personal details and get in touch with our Customer Service team.

The My CSCS app is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing card holders with access to the information they need when they need it.

Applications are now being processed within 24 to 48 hours, compared to a period of more than 20 days prior to the online system being introduced in late 2019.



Highlights and Accomplishments (cont.)

Industry Placement card

September saw the launch of the Industry Placement card, designed to support learners transitioning from the classroom into the workplace.

With changes to educational policy in the UK resulting in a greater focus on vocational education, including the Traineeship Skills Development Programme and T Level qualifications, the card is designed to mirror these new pathways into construction, which involve both classroom learning and hands-on experience.

The launch of the card came after extensive engagement with the industry, including the Construction Leadership Council and the Department for Education, taking onboard feedback from an industry-wide consultation carried out in early 2021.

CSCS Alliance

The recently formed CSCS Alliance exists to strengthen the collective voice of the 38 card schemes displaying the CSCS logo.

The CSCS Alliance also looks to support the delivery of the Construction Leadership Council's Industry Skills Plan and future needs of the industry, such as exploring evidence of Continuous Professional Development for cardholders, the phasing out of Industry Accreditation and the implementation of a smart technology solution that enables all cards to be electronically checked.

The CSCS Alliance's unique position on issues relating to skills, training and competence will play a key role in improving standards and fulfilling the construction industry's desire for a fully trained and qualified workforce.

The CSCS Alliance's unique position on issues relating to skills, training and competence will play a key role in improving standards.



Priorities for 2022

2022 is set to be another busy year. Increasing our efforts in tackling fraud, enabling all cards displaying the CSCS logo to be verified electronically and continuing to work towards a fully trained and qualified workforce are just some of the priorities that lie ahead.

Tackling fraud

Since the introduction of the Construction Leadership Council's One Industry Logo action, requiring a qualification for all CSCS cards, we have seen the emergence of criminal gangs running highly sophisticated operations to provide assisted or fraudulent qualifications.

Intelligence confirms that the two most targeted areas are the CITB Health, safety and environment test and the Level 1 Award in Health and Safety in a Construction Environment and its approved alternatives, both of which are requirements for the Labourer card.

Current fraud prevention measures are proving to be successful. The incidents of fraud remain relatively low, impacting less than one per cent of all applications, however there is more work to do to put an end to fraudulent practices.

CSCS is working with industry partners to introduce several counter fraud measures, including the introduction of electronic verification of qualification certificates that will make it increasingly difficult for fraudsters to operate.

Until the industry can stamp out fraudulently obtained qualifications the level of risk and reputational damage remains. The CSCS Board will continue to invest in tackling fraud until it is effectively eradicated.

Common Interface card checking app

Part of the collaborative, unified approach to tackling fraud and ensuring all cardholders are qualified for the job they do on site will come this year, with the introduction of the Common Interface card checking app.

For the first time, an app will feature checking options for all 38 card schemes displaying the CSCS logo. This will ensure compliance with the Construction Leadership Council's requirement that all card schemes "use smart technology which has the capability to electronically check agreed information relevant to a cardholder, using a common interface, without the need to manually enter data".

The key aim here is to ensure that all cards can be electronically checked at the site gates using one system that is compatible with all cards. CSCS facilitated the benchmarking exercise to understand the current status of each card scheme and a working group of card scheme representatives is on course to deliver the card checking solution by April 2022.

For the first time, an app will feature checking options for all 38 card schemes displaying the CSCS logo.



Priorities for 2022 (continued)

Qualifying the workforce

CSCS will continue to work with the industry to find a solution to the Construction Leadership Council requirement that all Industry Accreditation card holders have plans in place to achieve a recognised qualification by the end of 2024.

For those Industry Accreditation cardholders who have achieved the appropriate qualification for their occupation or become members of CSCS approved professional bodies, it will be a simple process to move onto the appropriate CSCS card.

For those without qualifications, CSCS is working with the industry to find ways to support these individuals in achieving the recognised qualification for their occupation. What that support looks like is uncertain, but one option to be explored is the delivery of an on-site assessment rather than the completion of a full NVQ.

The removal of Industry Accreditation is one of the most complex steps to be taken in helping to create the fully qualified workforce the industry desires. There is unlikely to be one single solution to all the challenges raised by the removal of Industry Accreditation. It is more likely that each occupation and sector will need to agree their own solutions and these may take some time to develop. This work will continue as a priority throughout 2022.

COVID-19

With the longer-term COVID-19 situation remaining uncertain, CSCS will continue to monitor developments and, if necessary, introduce measures to limit the impact of COVID on CSCS card applicants and the wider industry.

Where required, the website will be updated with changes related to COVID-19, particularly in relation to grace periods for card renewals, which we will keep under continuous review.

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CEO Closing Statement

The last 12 months have been dominated by the continued challenges presented by COVID-19. As with many businesses, we have been forced to adopt alternative ways of working and connecting with our many stakeholders.



Graham Wren, Chief Executive

Owing to the hard work of the CSCS Board and the executive team, we have been able to maintain our services, with minimal disruption, through this difficult time.

With the pandemic forcing the closure of CITB's Health, safety and environment test centres, and therefore our ability to issue and renew cards, we took the decision to extend the grace period for applicants to renew their cards. We are grateful for the support from industry during this period in exercising discretion when presented with expired cards.

Whether it be renewals or first-time applications, our online system has greatly simplified the process, reducing the average application time to less than 24 hours in most cases, allowing us to process 229,453 cards in 2021 at the time of writing.

For many organisations, the pandemic has served as a timely reminder of the need for efficient processes and fully utilising digital opportunities. CSCS is no different and, as we continue to improve our online offering, we are confident we will continue to provide the industry with a best-in-class card application service.

On a similar theme, we are looking forward to the introduction of a new app, planned for March 2022.

With a working title of the Common Interface App, this development will represent a major step forward as, for the first time, there will be one app with feature-checking options for all 38 CSCS Alliance card schemes. This ensures compliance with the Construction Leadership Council's requirement that all card schemes

incorporate smart technology into their operations with the capability to electronically check agreed information relevant to a cardholder, using a common interface, without the need to manually enter data.

Having one system with which we can electronically check all cards at the site gates will make life immeasurably easier for those checking cards on construction sites and is an early indicator of how well the new CSCS Alliance can function collaboratively when working towards a common goal.

The CSCS Alliance will use its unique position on issues relating to skills, training and competence to play a significant role in improving standards and fulfilling the construction industry's desire for a fully trained and qualified workforce.

It has already come together to develop the Common Interface App from scratch and its members will continue to raise awareness of the Alliance and the positive impact it is having on the industry.

I'd like to end my closing statement, and with it the Annual Review for 2021, by thanking the CSCS Board, our partners and the CSCS staff for their tireless work this year. Through their combined efforts we remain in a strong position and I look forward to implementing the further developments planned over the coming months. With cross-industry collaboration we will continue to push for the necessary changes that will ensure we maintain high standards and safety within construction.

Graham Wren, Chief Executive

Having one system with which we can electronically check all cards at the site gates will make life immeasurably easier for those checking cards on construction sites.



**Construction Skills
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