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Skillnet MMC Accelerate Scheme Set To Gather Pace in 2025

A collaboration between CitA and Skillnet Ireland, the new Skillnet MMC Accelerate Scheme will see the launch of a new online platform in May and eight business support events held at various locations around the country between now and the end of the year.

OFFICIALLY launched last August, this exciting new programme marks an extension of CitA's long-running collaboration with Skillnet Ireland and aims to provide both individual employees and companies operating in the construction sector with the resources required to upskill in Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).

CitA is working strategically with four key partners to help accelerate the adoption of MMC in Ireland – MMC Ireland, Laois Offaly Education Training Board, Construct Innovate and the Construction Industry Federation's Smart Offsite Association (SOSA). All four partners are committed to promoting the benefits of MMC and off-site manufacturing and all have welcomed the initiative.

"With so many challenges on the horizon, the clear message to the construction industry is that it must modernise, upskill and diversify if it is to meet productivity and sustainability targets over the coming years," Dr. Alan Hore, CitA Co-Founder and Director, explains. "We know that MMC will play a pivotal role in achieving those targets and we hope that the schemes platform will provide an invaluable resource for people working in the

sector to update their skill sets accordingly, and adopt MMC into their businesses processes. The regional events will help forge new relationships with potential employers, suppliers and customers in their locality for the benefit of all."

THE PLATFORM

A centralised platform focused on skills and talent development for MMC can bridge workforce gaps, upskill professionals, and attract new talent to the Irish construction industry.

"This platform will play a transformative role in the industry by addressing key labour and skill challenges to support talent growth and workforce readiness, Dr. Hore explains. "We are planning for the platform to define career pathways and promoting the MMC industry as a viable career. We don't see the MMC industry as a separate industry to the currently mainly traditional building sector but as complimentary in driving greater sustainability and productivity that the industry has struggled with.



"The platform will seek to provide clearer roadmaps for entry and progression into careers that would not be traditionally associated in construction, such as digital construction specialists, offsite manufacturing engineers, modular construction managers, and robotics technicians. We hope to provide clear entry points for apprentices, graduates, and career changers offering the opportunity for greater regional employment and more controlled and safer working environments."

In addition to the career pathways into the MMC sector, the platform will seek to support



the many education and training initiatives offered by our strategic partners and others. “We will host centralised information on MMC courses and certifications offered across the country. This will include both formal education programmes at various NFQ levels but also online learning modules, interactive webinars, and virtual reality (VR) training simulations to make upskilling more accessible for everyone. Supporting micro-credentialing to allow bite-sized learning without requiring long-term commitments will be a key focus,” Dr. Hore adds.

“Skillnet MMC Accelerate in partnership with Construction IT Alliance (CitA) will create a vital resource for construction firms and workers seeking to expand their business horizons and the capacity to employ innovative MMC construction practices.”
Mark Jordan, Skillnet Ireland

“This centralised platform focused on skills and talent development for MMC can bridge workforce gaps, upskill professionals, and attract new talent to the Irish construction industry. By consolidating education, career pathways, and industry links, this platform would future proof the Irish construction workforce, help accelerate MMC adoption and promote the work of our strategic partners. We plan not to duplicate the work of our strategic partners but to actively promote their various initiatives.”



Another important ingredient of the platform is the inclusion of a MMC Competency Framework which is designed to support businesses in identifying workforce needs, upskilling their teams and fostering future-ready talent. It will also help to establish standards for essential MMC skills for professionals at all levels, which will serve as a significant and lasting benefit for the industry as a whole. “We are hopeful in time that this framework (and revisions thereof) will gain recognition and endorsement from both our strategic partners and other representative organisations, such as the professional bodies in the sector.” Dr. Hore says.

REGIONAL EVENTS

The schemes regional events will bring together individuals, companies, educational institutes, local government bodies and relevant NGOs to learn about the latest MMC developments, exchange ideas and explore career opportunities in the immediate area. It will also include industry case studies and demonstrations where attendees can experience the benefits of MMC technology for themselves. Any learnings from these events will also be made available on the platform.

“The industry was forced to adapt to severe restrictions during the pandemic,” Dr. Hore explains. “However, we also learned a number of valuable lessons, particularly on the mechanical and electrical engineering side, which have been developed and put into practice since. We learned that a higher percentage of construction and assembly work could be completed on the factory floor before being transported to the site more quickly and at lower cost using MMC. The potential benefits for the industry as a whole are huge, not just in terms of time and cost saving but in boosting productivity and sustainability as well, and we want to use these events as a beacon to showcase what can be achieved with MMC.”

Speaking about the new initiative, Mark Jordan, Chief Strategy Officer, Skillnet Ireland says: “Skillnet MMC Accelerate in partnership with Construction IT Alliance (CitA) will create a vital resource for construction firms and workers seeking to expand their business horizons and the capacity to employ innovative MMC construction practices. Sustainability is a top priority for all businesses, and, through this collaboration, construction companies can benefit from access to the talent, upskilling supports, knowledge and networks that will help to accelerate their adoption of MMC.”

The scheme will seek to promote all seven categories of MMC that are recognised as improving speed, efficiency, and sustainability in construction. For example:

1. Pre-Manufactured 3D Systems (Fully Modular Buildings) where buildings or large sections of buildings are made in a factory and transported to the site, like giant Lego pieces. For example, modular homes and hotel rooms.
2. Pre-Manufactured 2D Systems (Panelised Construction) where flat sections (walls, floors, roofs) are built offsite and assembled onsite. For example, timber or steel frames.
3. Pre-Manufactured Components (Smaller Factory-Made Parts) where smaller pre-manufacturing approaches include wall, floor and roofing systems. For example, columns, beams, floors, staircases and roof structures.
4. Additive Manufacturing (3D Printing) where buildings or components are 3D-printed using concrete or other materials. For example, 3D-concrete printed houses.
5. Non-Structural Assemblies and Sub-Assemblies – where a series of different pre-manufacturing approaches are used, such as, non-structural walling systems, roof cassettes, mini-volumetric units. For example, whole bathroom, kitchen and MEP assemblies.
6. Site-Based MMC (Innovative Onsite Techniques) – where new onsite construction methods are deployed using better tools and materials. For example, large format walling and roofing products and easy to install MEP systems.
7. Smart Construction (Digital & Data-Driven Building) where use of AI, BIM, and automation is used to improve efficiency and quality. For example, digital twins, AI-powered planning and smart sensors.

“We will seek to showcase all of these MMC methods both on the new platform and by hosting our events in smart factory locations throughout the country where these methods are manufactured in more

controlled environments demonstrating first-hand how the construction industry can build faster, reduce waste, and cut costs, making projects greener and more efficient,” Dr. Hore adds.

WHO SHOULD ENGAGE

The Skillnet MMC Accelerate Scheme will bring significant benefits for any individual or business engaged in construction-related activities, according to Dr Hore. These include access to skills and innovation, the opportunity to network and collaborate, and enhanced visibility and resources amongst others.

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Dr. Alan Hore

“It’s about making businesses and individuals aware of what’s going on in their locality and how they can benefit,” he points out. “It’s a great opportunity for them to access cutting-edge training and certification to upskill, adopt advanced construction methods, improve efficiency and boost productivity. It’s also a chance to connect with industry leaders, share expertise and build partnerships. In addition, they can leverage the platform to access everything from tailored resources and industry insights to case studies, news, research and other supports.”

2024 EVENTS

The Skillnet MMC Accelerate team held four events last year with a further eight planned for 2025.

The first event took place at the beginning

of September at the CPAC Modular facility in Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. Next stop was the Kingspan’s IKON Centre in Kingscourt, Co. Cavan in October followed by Midland Steel in Portlaoise, Co. Laois in November. The final event of the year was hosted by Vision Built at its plant in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo in early December.

“We got a fantastic reception everywhere we went which demonstrates strong interest from the industry as a whole in learning about MMC and its benefits,” Dr. Hore says. “We saw a number of practical demonstrations including one at Midland Steel, a world’s first fully automated steel reinforcement smart factory together with a live demonstration of the time savings achieved in comparison to more traditional labour-intensive steel fixing on site displayed at the event. All four events were real examples of innovative activity in the MMC industry, all providing much needed local employment. There was a clear message from the MMC companies that hosted these meetings that strong project pipeline is critical in the MMC industry because it ensures consistent demand, investment, and workforce stability.”

PLANS FOR 2025

Following on from the success of last year’s business support events, a further eight are scheduled for 2025 beginning at the Cairn Seven Mills site in Cappagh, Co. Dublin in late February. This will be followed by an event at the Procon modular manufacturing facility in Ashbrook, Co. Laois in late March, with a further six to be announced in the coming months.

“We are determined to cover as much of the country as possible. We don’t want to just go to the main urban areas, but want to reach as many people as possible,” Dr. Hore adds. “It’s an important message for the industry and we are determined to get it out there.” ■

