

The Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) is the leading voice of electrical contractors in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. For over a century ECA has played a key role in driving standards and supporting the growth of a thriving industry, which is now crucial to the delivery and economic opportunity of net zero.

## ECA's Charter to Recharge Electrical Skills in Wales

Wales is eager to preserve its place at the vanguard of a new 'green' industrial revolution. This revolution will be built on extensive decarbonisation. It will be made possible by rapid expansion of electrification and digitalisation across multiple sectors and technologies. ECA Wales are enthusiastic supporters of the direction of travel which Welsh Government has set. Yet, significant challenges are slowing down delivery. These challenges include:



Electricians and electrical businesses (99.8% of electrical firms are SMEs) are crucial to society and contribute much to the wider Welsh economy. Yet they are not always adequately consulted or considered by policymakers.

Wales is in urgent need of a more consistent, collaborative, and structured dialogue between the electrical industry, education, and public bodies. This will ensure that the right 'green electrical' skills initiatives are in place and that these initiatives are working sufficiently well to achieve our shared 'net zero' ambitions.



Wales today lacks enough competent, qualified electricians.

The country needs to accelerate recent growth in electrical apprentices to a minimum of 700 starts every year, to maintain the size of the current workforce. This means at least 100 more electrical apprentices starting each year than started in 2023/24.

Employers wish to collaborate more closely with education providers and public bodies to improve the quality of apprenticeship training, including a stronger focus on achieving industry-recognised standards of competence.



Procurement policies in Wales currently lack meaningful support for sustainable employment and skills development within supply chains. This is despite high-level commitments to *Social Partnership and Wellbeing of Future Generations*.

Progression rates from the new suite of L2 Foundation and Progression qualifications into industry recognised L3 apprenticeships remain unreported and therefore uncertain. Such uncertainty undermines industry confidence in these qualifications as springboards into the apprenticeship.

### ECA is on mission to recharge electrical skills

Electrical employers in Wales want to do more to help colleges, schools and careers services prepare young people for apprenticeships. They are keen to communicate the life-long advantages of skilled trade careers and the role they will play in the future of Wales.

# Future Electrical Skills Alliance

ECA believes that broader and deeper collaboration on electrical skills between Welsh Government, Medr, other public bodies, education providers and the electrical industry is essential for Wales to achieve its ambitions for a more prosperous and 'net zero' future. The key pillars of such an alliance would be:

## 1. Electricians at the heart of net zero

**Establish** regular, structured dialogue on electrical skills. The dialogue to include both national/ strategic and regional/ operational dimensions.

**Seize** the opportunity of any review of the Level 3 BSE Electrotechnical Installation qualification to broaden electrical industry input and buy in.

**Work with** ECA's Wales Skills Forum to maximise the benefits of Wales's trailblazing Personal Learning Accounts programme.

## 2. Boosting the size and quality of electrotechnical apprenticeship provision

**Agree** a joint strategy and plan for increasing annual electrical apprentice starts and completions in Wales to sustainable levels to achieve net zero goals.

**Align** funding allocated to electrical apprenticeship provision with this plan and a realistic assessment of the resources required for effective delivery.

**Explore** measures to encourage greater employer-provider collaboration to enhance training delivery and support learners to achieve industry-recognised competence standards.

## 3. Closer collaboration for a stronger skills pipeline

**Include** ambitious skills development targets into public contracts, with meaningful input from electrical and other employing sectors into target design, enforcement, and reporting.

**Monitor** and take action to maximise progression rates from classroom-based qualifications into apprenticeships and other industry-recognised training routes.

**Facilitate** greater industry input into careers advice and the school curriculum to transform awareness of electrical careers opportunities and the sector's essential contribution to Wales's future.

The shortage of qualified electricians, intensified by a leaky skills pipeline, poses a serious but solvable challenge to achieving net-zero targets. We urge policymakers, industry leaders, and educators to come together and join our mission to **#Recharge Electrical Skills** by endorsing the **Future Electrical Skills Alliance**.