

REINFORCE

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF REINFORCEMENT

26

Building the future workforce

Welding guidance updated

Reinforcement industry seminar report

Reinforced offices for Grade A offices

Just-in-time and fully flexible progress

What's the forecast for 2027?

7 Steel investment

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REINFORCE 26

Welcome

As we near the end of 2026 it is appropriate that this issue of Reinforce is focused on looking forward. In particular, it examines how the UK reinforcement sector is turning current challenges into future solutions.

A key challenge is attracting, developing and retaining a competent workforce. BAR member CONSTRUCT is setting the agenda by developing competence pathways for the steel fixing and formwork sectors and initiating a Super Sector programme that aims to coordinate collaborative activity across multiple organisations and ensuring industry priorities are translated into future practical outcomes. Meanwhile, all BAR members are fully committed to investing in programmes to attract, train and retain a modern reinforcement manufacturing and fabricating workforce.

Complementing this is BAR's programme of developing best industry practice. The recently updated reinforcement welding guide and involvement in the pan-industry development of a reinforcement delivery and lifting guide are examples of how the implementation of best industry practice improves current and future working environments. Alongside this is BAR's forwarding reinforced concrete as the best construction option. Its new report examining the benefits of reinforced concrete construction for new Grade A offices underlines how the material offers unrivalled whole life cost and sustainability benefits with built-in future-proofing.

Investment in the future is underlined Sev.en Global Investments (Sev.en GI), owners of Cardiff-based 7 Steel UK, announcement of plans to invest almost £100 million in the business. The investment will cover plant upgrades, technology improvements and wider operational development. Further examples include the ongoing investment by the rebar supply chain such as Ischebeck Titan, Dextra, nVent and Progress Machinery and Automation into reinforcement plant and product developments.

The future will have its challenges, but BAR and its members will meet them with new ideas, industry collaboration, investment and the determination to move forward the UK reinforcement sector as a whole.

Steve Elliott
Chairman, British Association of Reinforcement

The British Association of Reinforcement (BAR) is the industry association for UK manufacturers and fabricators of steel reinforcement products including cut-and-bent and mesh.

BAR aims to add value to the reinforcement industry via market and product development, the promotion of health and safety as well as social value and environmental best practice and providing a forum to help forward the reinforced concrete industry as a whole.

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WHAT WILL 2027 BRING?

2026 has been a challenging year for the UK construction industry. Will 2027 be any better?

The UK construction industry continues to shrink as it heads towards 2027. Output fell by 0.2% in August 2026, the fourth monthly decline in a row, according to the latest Office for National Statistics data. Over the three months to August, total output was down 1.0%, with new work down 1.4% and repair and maintenance down 0.3%, and private new housing fell by 3.2%. New orders fell by 11.8% in the second quarter of 2026 compared with the first, with large falls in private commercial and public non-housing work, and the UK Construction PMI was still below the 50 no-change mark in September at 46.1, so contractors were still reporting falling activity as the final quarter began. Against this background one wonders what 2027 holds. There are a number of forecasts some pessimistic others optimistic.

The Construction Products Association (CPA) has cut its forecast for construction output growth in 2027, as higher oil and energy prices are expected to keep inflation and interest rates higher for longer. The CPA warns that output for this year is expected to fall by 4 per cent and rise only by 0.4 per cent next year. This is a downgrade from its summer forecast of a 3.3 per cent fall in 2026 and 1.2 per cent growth in 2027. The CPA still forecasts growth of 2.9 per cent in 2028.

At Savills the forecast is for a gradual recovery during 2027. It's Savills Build: Perspective monitors sentiment on build costs and programme timescales across 64 UK markets and sectors and suggests that pressure on build costs and programme timescales is waning. However, subdued economic growth, cautious investor sentiment and elevated financing costs will continue to constrain project viability across the construction sector.

The Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) reports that total new work output is forecast to contract by 3.7% in 2026 before returning to modest growth of 2.2% in 2027. It is expected to increase by 11.4% between 2026 and 2031. It believes that high energy and materials costs will continue to put pressure on the construction supply chain, while subdued workloads keep competition for projects high. Contractors are absorbing or mitigating some cost increases to remain competitive, creating a growing gap between input cost inflation and tender price growth.

Glenigans offers the most optimistic forecast with the value of UK construction projects worth less than £100m starting on site forecast to rise by 11% in 2027, as investment in water infrastructure, schools and hospitals helps drive a recovery. Glenigans expects a further 7% rise in 2028. It believes that momentum will pick-up as funds from the Spending Review are released and public projects, utilities upgrades and critical infrastructure investment gradually start to come online. this, combined with impetus in specific private sector niches like offices and data centres, will have a fortifying effect across the rest of the industry.

There is considerable discrepancy between the 2027 forecasts. Most of that is due to what each one measures. CPA forecasts the volume of work actually delivered on site, BCIS forecasts new-work output, while Glenigan measures the value of underlying project starts below £100m. There is one constant though. BAR will continue to forward reinforced concrete as the best construction solution and its members as being the best placed to help deliver that solution.

BUILDING THE FUTURE REINFORCEMENT WORKFORCE



The reinforcement sector continues to face significant challenges in attracting, developing and retaining a competent workforce capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly complex construction environment. Addressing these challenges requires strong industry leadership, effective collaboration and a shared commitment to developing clear and accessible routes into the profession believes Britpave member CONSTRUCT.

As the sector skills organisation for the concrete structures industry, CONSTRUCT continues to work closely with employers, training providers, awarding organisations, CITB, CARES and trade associations such as BAR to ensure that industry needs are reflected in training, qualifications and competence frameworks.

A key focus during 2026 has been the development of competence pathways for the steel fixing and formwork sectors. These pathways have been designed to provide employers and individuals with a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours required at each stage of a career, from entry-level roles through to supervision and management. By creating structured progression routes, the industry can provide greater certainty for employers while helping individuals build rewarding long-term careers.

Supporting this work is the CONSTRUCT Training Forum, which plays a vital role in identifying industry training needs, sharing best practice and helping to shape future training provision across the concrete structures sector. The Forum is led by Martyn W Price MBE, Business & People Development Director at MPB Structures and Chair of the CONSTRUCT Training Forum, together with Niamh Burke, Health & Safety Manager at Realtime Civil Engineering and Vice Chair of the CONSTRUCT Training Forum. Martyn and Niamh lead the quarterly Training Forum meetings, bringing together employers, training providers and industry stakeholders to discuss skills development, competence, qualifications and emerging workforce challenges. The Forum provides an important mechanism for ensuring that industry needs are reflected in CONSTRUCT's training and competence initiatives and that members have a direct voice in shaping the future skills agenda.

CONSTRUCT's influence extends beyond its direct sector activities. CONSTRUCT General Manager, Ian Burnett, currently serves as the lead for the Structural Super Sector, bringing together key organisations from across the concrete and structural construction industries to address common challenges relating to skills, competence, standards and workforce development. Supporting this work, CONSTRUCT Assistant General Manager, Rosie Canty, serves as a Super Sector Programme Manager, helping to coordinate collaborative activity across multiple organisations and ensuring industry priorities are translated into practical outcomes.

This leadership role enables CONSTRUCT to represent the interests of the reinforcement sector at a strategic level while ensuring that the voice of reinforcement contractors and employers is heard in wider industry discussions. Through the Super Sector programme, CONSTRUCT is helping to create stronger alignment between industry bodies, employers and training organisations, reducing duplication and driving greater consistency across workforce development initiatives.

Alongside this work, CONSTRUCT continues to actively support recruitment initiatives and engagement with new entrants to the industry, including apprenticeship programmes, skills bootcamps and initiatives aimed at attracting ex-service personnel into construction careers. These activities are helping to raise awareness of the rewarding opportunities available within the reinforcement sector and support the industry's future talent pipeline.

The challenges facing the construction industry cannot be solved by any one organisation acting alone. Success depends upon continued collaboration between employers, trade associations, training providers and professional bodies. Through its leadership of the Structural Super Sector and its ongoing work on competence, training and workforce development, CONSTRUCT remains committed to helping build a stronger, more skilled and more sustainable reinforcement sector for the future.

WELDING VENTILATION BEST PRACTICE

Negating the potential risks from welding fumes is a major health and safety concern for steel reinforcement suppliers and fabricators. BAR has updated its best practice welding ventilation guide with an increased focus on the use of local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) demands that workers must be protected from the health risks from welding fume which can cause a wide range of health conditions including asthma and cancer. These risks can be controlled by ensuring that they are recognised and addressed so that welding is carried out in a way that produces less fume by maintaining introducing fresh air, providing good general ventilation, using respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and personal protective equipment (PPE) and investing in local exhaust ventilation (LEV). All supported with ongoing training so that operatives are fully competent. The updated 'BAR Best Practice Guidance: Welding Ventilation' does what it says on the cover. It provides comprehensive advice on what reinforcement suppliers and fabricators should do in order to provide a safe working environment for those involved in the welding of steel reinforcement. The increased use of prefabricated reinforcement driven by the need for efficient and sustainable construction and underlines the importance of welding best practice.

The guidance provides an outline of the main welding processes for steel reinforcement, an examination of potential fume hazards and natural and mechanical ventilation. In particular, the addresses the emphasis of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on the importance of the use of local exhaust ventilation to remove welding fume at source. In 2019, the HSE issued a safety alert that significantly changed the regulatory landscape for welding by classifying all welding fume as being carcinogenic, calling for RPE for both indoor and outdoor welding and requiring regular monitoring and assessment. The alert has been followed by HSE taking a more assertive approach to enforcement with particular focus on LEV.

This enforcement must take into account that the variable nature of reinforcement means that one type of LEV does not meet every ventilation need. The type of LEV used must be determined by as a result of trails and detailed risk assessments. In addition, for large prefabricated reinforcement the effective use of LEV can be problematic as most of the welds are short time tack welds that require constant LEV repositioning.





The approaches most commonly used is a moveable capture hood, welding bench with a built-in extraction system and on-torch extraction integrated with the welding gun. Each have their benefits and limitation. Moveable capture hoods offer good fume extraction when positioned correctly close to the welding operation with the assurance that it is not drawing welding fumes across the breathing zone. However, the hood must be moved to accommodate short duration welds. Welding benches with built-in fume extraction also offer good fume extraction but the size of the table may limit the size of reinforcement that can be welded. On-torch extraction offers more convenience when performing short duration welding. However, the efficiency of fume extraction can be compromised by the welding torch angle. Whatever approach is used, the point of fume extraction should be placed as close as possible to the work area be positioned to draw the welding fume away from the breathing zone. In addition, fume extractor guns and vacuum nozzles should be placed at a distance from the fume source to ensure that the maximum amount of fume and gases are removed. Furthermore, the LEV's efficiency should be monitored by the steel supplier and fabricator and be tested by a competent organisation every 14 months.

Above all, it must be remembered that LEV is part of an overall welding fume strategy that includes all necessary training and risk assessment, full provision of RPE and PEE, enhanced airflow and fresh air supply plus mechanical ventilation with ongoing monitoring and testing.

The use of factory-welded prefabricated reinforcement is increasing as designers, engineers and contractors, driven by the need for greater cost efficiencies and sustainability, seek solutions that can be delivered to site on a just-in-time basis where it can fixed simply and quickly with reduced labour and minimal waste. This in turn has increased the focus on and the demand for best industry practice to ensure a safe welding working environment.

To download
'BAR Best Practice Guidance: Welding Ventilation'
visit: **www.-uk.bar.org/publications**

REINFORCED CONCRETE FOR GRADE A OFFICES

Many UK towns and cities are running out of Grade A office space. A new BAR report highlights how reinforced concrete offers an unrivalled construction solution.

A number of factors are combining to further the demand for new Grade A prime office accommodation whether speculative or bespoke. Firstly, there is a growing realisation that much of the available space will either be outdated by 2030 or will have been converted into hotels and residential accommodation. Secondly, companies are wanting to lure staff away from 'working from home' with modern, attractive work environments. Thirdly, many existing offices will be too expensive to upgrade to meet requirements of incoming minimum energy efficiency standards. This has resulted in a 'flight to quality' as the demand for prime office space takes-off. This is underlined by agents CBRE who reported that in 2025 that there was only 1.3 years of Grade A office supply under construction across the whole of the UK. This pipeline will be occupied at a quicker rate than new construction projects commence. As a result, CBRE predicted a worsening supply of Grade A office space in 2026 and beyond.

Sustainability is a key driver for new Grade A space with businesses favouring energy-efficient buildings that support net-zero ambitions. The demand for sustainability is furthered by new minimum energy efficiency requirements. Since 2023 offices must adhere to Minimum Energy Efficient Standards (MEES). Offices with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of E or below may not be rented out. In order to meet national net zero targets, the Government plans to introduce a minimum rating of C by 2027 and B in 2030. It is estimated that over 70% of office space in England is rated D or lower.

In addition, in future the environmental claims of buildings can be verified. The 2026 launch of Version 1 of the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard (UK NZCBS) provides for the first time a technical standard that will provide proof that buildings are as green as they purport to be as it takes into account the impacts of energy and material use. UK NZCBS provides a set of consistent rules to create a level playing field around the definition of net zero carbon. Previously, there has been no single, agreed methodology for defining what 'net zero carbon' means for buildings in the UK.

The provision of proof of the zero carbon impact of offices will help to attract and retain staff. Increasingly, staff expect employers to be committed to sustainable business practices. A survey from agents JLL found that up to 81% of workers aged 21 – 30 expect their employer to have sustainable business practices.

In addition, employers are realising the need for a positive work-health balance. The physical working environment has a direct impact upon employee wellness and productivity. Research carried out by Gallup in 2017 linked wellness with high levels of employee satisfaction and a 21% rise in productivity. Factors for a good working environment include thermal comfort, air quality, and good acoustics. If companies wish to attract and retain staff and ensure good performance levels then Grade A offices are an attractive proposition.



Today's Grade A space such as New Steet Square, London, aims to provide a positive working environment

Reinforced concrete offers a range of unrivalled performance benefits that make it well-suited to the provision of Grade A office space. These concrete benefits are built-in and are provided with no additional financial or carbon cost.

An important built-in benefit is thermal mass. Concrete inherent thermal mass facilitates a fabric-first and passive cooling approach that reduces ongoing operational heating and air-conditioning bills and carbon emissions. Utilising the thermal mass of concrete via exposure of concrete ceilings and walls can reduce reliance on energy guzzling air-conditioning due the summer and retain heat better during the winter.

Often referred to as Fabric Energy Storage (FES), the basic approach is to expose the soffit of concrete floor slabs which can then absorb heat gains during warm weather and so reduce the internal temperature. The use of cooler night-time air ventilation or embedded water-cooling cools the soffits in readiness for the following day. The best level of thermal mass is provided by heavyweight concrete construction. Lightweight construction such as steel and timber structures do not offer comparable levels of heat absorption. When used as part of an integrated passive design solution that includes building orientation, shading and natural ventilation, concrete's thermal mass can reduce significantly the reliance on air-conditioning and in return reduce the level of carbon emissions the ongoing energy costs.

Similarly, during the winter the absorption and slow release of heat by heavyweight concrete construction smooths out the peaks and troughs of internal heat and provides a more balanced internal temperature.

Granted that some passively cooled concrete buildings may have an initial higher embodied CO_2 than lightweight buildings. However, that will be quickly offset by the reductions in ongoing operational CO_2 relating to air-conditioning and heating. These offset reductions can take effect from just one to six years.

Furthermore, concrete does not need any additional fire-proofing, sound insulation, robust wall finishes, flood resilient materials. These performance benefits are inherent. Additional materials mean additional financial costs and additional CO_2 impacts.

Key long-term sustainability credentials for Grade A offices include the ability to offer future proof flexibility and, at end-of-life to be efficiently recycled. Future proof flexibility means that an office can be updated and modified to meet future requirements. Reinforced concrete construction offers a level future flexibility that other construction materials struggle to match. For example, the use of thin post-tensioned concrete floors enables the positioning of pre-determined 'soft spots' to allow future service openings to be made relatively easily without encountering a mass of upstand beams. Large floor plates allow larger column- free spaces to ensure that the internal space is uncomplicated and easy to adapt. Furthermore, the use of post-tensioned concrete floors can minimise the overall height of the buildings and reduced the amount of required concrete and reinforcement.



Exposed soffits help to realise the potential of concrete's inherent thermal efficiency

Reduce, recycle and reuse are priorities for good circular economy practice. When reinforced concrete does eventually reach the end of its life, it can be recycled. Steel reinforcement can be retrieved and reused as a raw material to make new reinforcement.

The steel reinforcement produced by BAR reinforcement manufacturing members is made from 98% recycled scrap metal and can itself be recovered, recycled and re-used. The final 2% consists of ferro-alloys and minerals added to the production process in order to remove impurities from the steel and to ensure the finished product has the correct properties. The impurities are removed through the blast furnace slag. This acts as a steel by-product that is recycled as an aggregate for the construction industry and as clinker for the concrete industry.

Overall, reinforced concrete offers a solution for both present and future office space. To download a copy of the report *'Reinforced concrete construction for Grade A offices'* visit: **www.uk-bar.org/publications**



BAR INDUSTRY SEMINAR 2026 REPORT

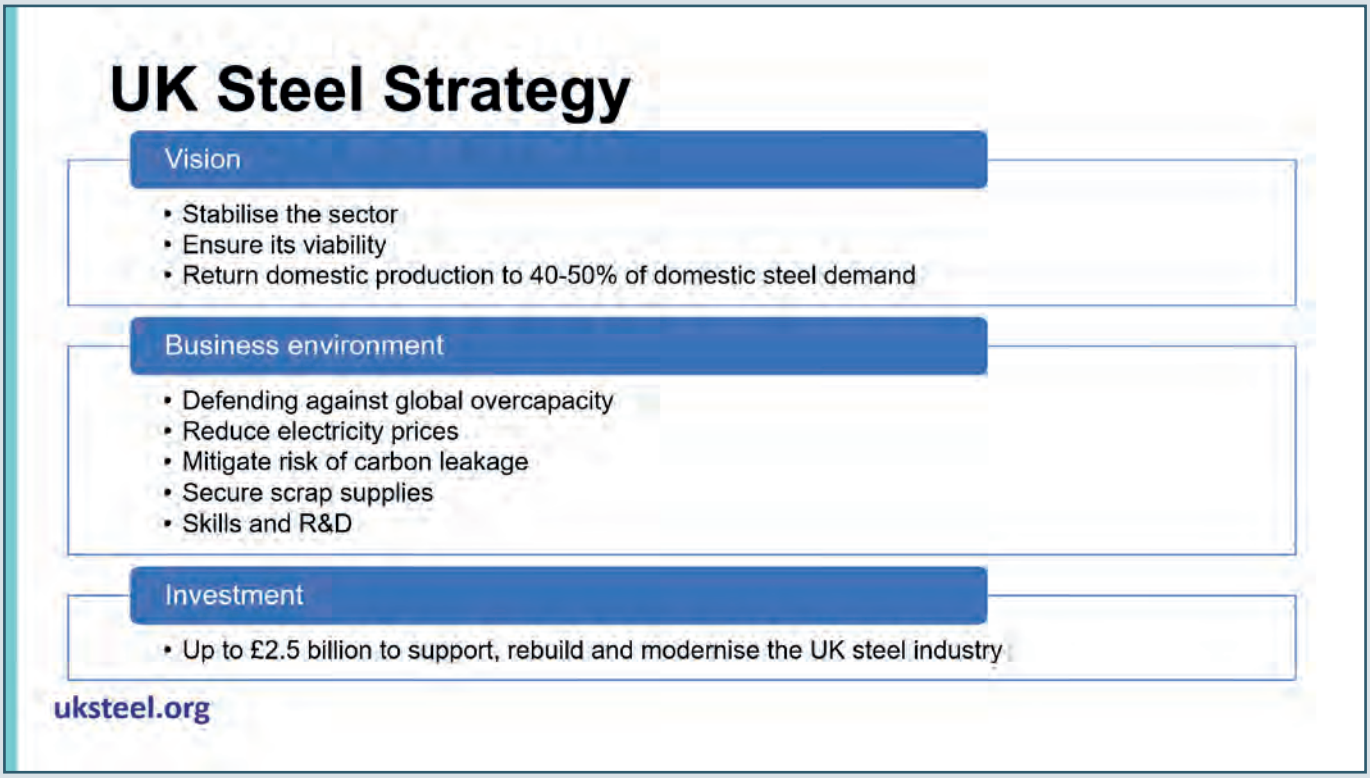
The 2026 BAR industry seminar examined the challenges facing the UK reinforcement sector. Attendees learnt from the wide range of speakers that these challenges can be answered with industry collaboration, innovation and best practice.

Notably one of the main challenges facing the industry is the business environment that it finds itself in. Chrysa Glystra, Director Trade & Economics, UK Steel, examined a range of business challenges facing the UK steel industry. These include falling crude steel production and finished steel demand and a UK market share that has dropped to 32% from 42% in 2021 against a background of increasing electricity prices high sustainability expectations and the need for trade protection. The scale of the challenges is underlined by the difference in industrial electricity prices. In the UK, these are 49% higher than France, 15% higher than Germany and 71% higher than Turkey.

Recognising the problems facing a key industry sector, the government has launched a UK Steel Strategy aimed at forwarding competitiveness and viability.

The Strategy calls for a number of measures to be implemented. These include a 51% reduction in UK trade quotas – the equivalent to 25% of imports. Regarding energy costs, there should be 90% Network Charging compensation increased from 60% for Ells and full exemption from Capacity Market and Renewable levies. In addition, there needs to be stronger incentives to use UK steel in projects. All very grand, but Chrysa asked if ambition will be met with action? She emphasised the need for industry collaboration and pressure to ensure that the government promises to deliver a thriving, competitive and low-carbon UK steel industry are to be realised. Ending on a positive note, Chrysa outlined the significant private investment being made into the UK steel industry by 7 Steel, Sheffield Forgemasters, Marcegaglia Stainless, Special Melted Products and Tata Steel together with the nationalisation of British Steel head of major new investment. The government needs to ensure a business environment that rewards this investment.

Moving from an overall industry challenges, the next presentation highlighted the specific challenge of ensuring safe steel reinforcement deliveries. Delivered by Steve Elliott, BAR Chairman, on behalf of Darren Biggs, Lead Appointed Person, Sir Robert McAlpine, who





due to illness was unable to attend, the presentation explained how the delivery of steel reinforcement can have recurring challenging issues. These include: vehicle access, edge protection, load height, stacking, separation, sling paths and the way that loads are presented for unloading. These issues stem from the lack of a standardised aligned approach. There is no baseline. As a result, different projects, contractors, suppliers and hauliers can have different expectations of what is acceptable for a reinforcement delivery.

The need to align industry practice was underlined by an industry survey that highlighted the potential health and safety problems of stepping onto loads, mismatch between height and edge protection, variation in vehicle set-up, workarounds required and inconsistencies from project-to-project. The extent of the problem is represented by the finding that 60% of the survey respondents reported that access more often than not required stepping directly onto reinforcement bundles.

The presentation was keen to forward that industry delivery alignment should mean adding significant cost. It is about agreeing a simple, consistent baseline that includes suitable edge protection planned load access without having to stand on reinforcement bundles, consistent use of separation timbers and pre-slinging arrangements that provide predictable capacity, durability and traceability. By working together, the industry can enable safer and more efficient delivery and off-loading of reinforcement.

The next two presentations heard how innovation and investment by rebar accessories and plant suppliers is enabling more efficient reinforcement fabrication and construction.

Trevor Larkin, Specialist Product Manager at Ischebeck Inform presented on the development and continued enhancement of its RECO system for on-site rebar cage prefabrication. Reinforcement cages are essential to the structural integrity of concrete elements, yet the methods traditionally used to fix reinforcement, tie wire and welding, can present limitations. Unstable cages, site safety risks, and delays caused by hot works are all-too-common issues. Responding to these challenges, Ischebeck TITAN developed the RECO Clamp: a mechanical, engineered solution that the company believes transforms how reinforcement cages are built and handled.



The RECO clamp provides a repeatable, structural connection around ribbed bars using a simple mechanical assembly. Each clamp consists of a high-strength Grade 8.8 bolt, cover plates, and flange or serrated nuts tightened to a known torque. This creates a consistent clamping force and a known structural performance. There is a range of different

clamp models to accommodate most reinforcement configurations. All outperform the use of tie wires. A small number of clamps can replace dozens of wire ties while delivering proven structural fixity. Unlike welds that can crack, RECO Clamps retain a degree of elasticity. Installation is faster and more reliable, in some applications, switching to RECO will massively cut installation time. Compared with on-site welding, the RECO system can reduce costs by more than 50%. The concrete proof was demonstrated by a range of project applications including Hinckley Point C. These advantages increase as a result of a programme of product development and innovation.

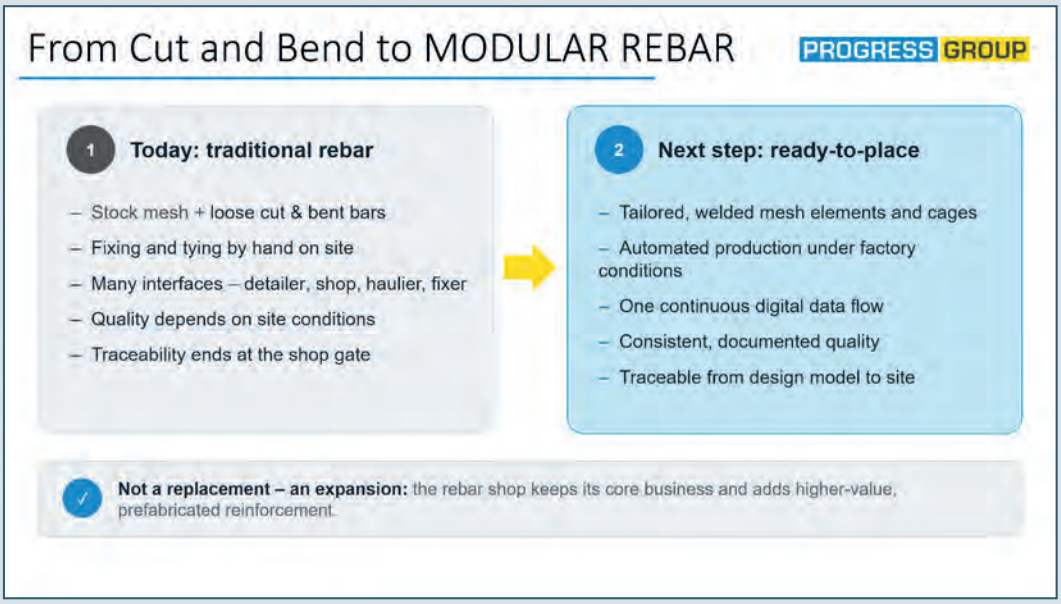
Jack Berrisford, Area Sales Manager, and Kevin Unterkircher, Product Owner & Project Manager, Progress Machinery & Automation continued the theme of new developments for increased reinforcement efficiency.

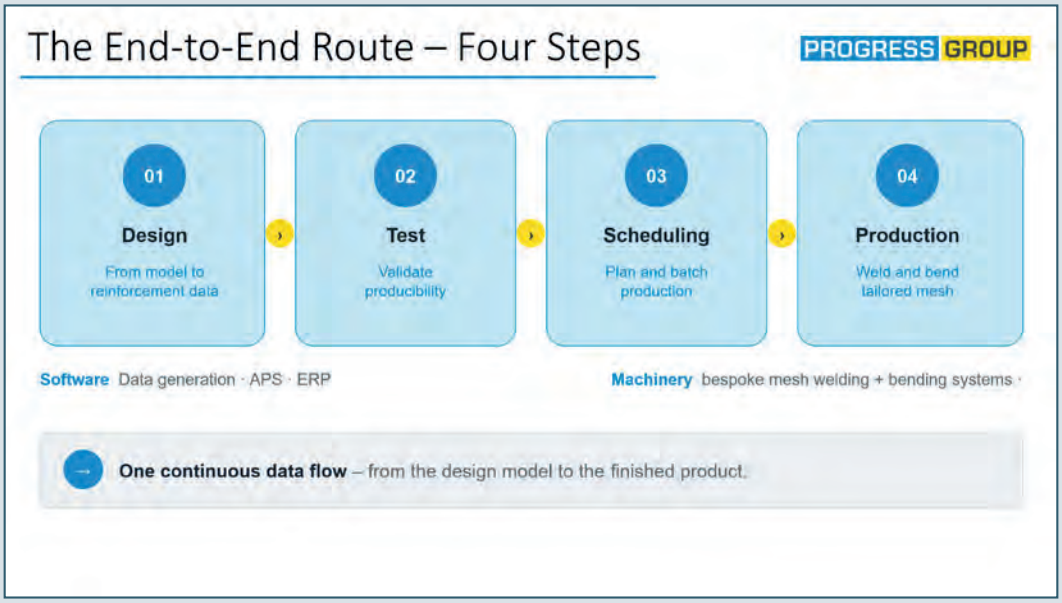
They explained how for many reinforcement fabricators, the traditional model remains centred on supplying cut and bent bar for assembly on site. But labour shortages, tighter programmes and demands for safety, quality and traceability create an opportunity to move more of that work into the factory as the benefits of prefabrication are increasingly realised.

With this in mind, the presentation explored how rebar shops can use flexible, project-specific mesh production to develop higher-value prefabricated reinforcement solutions.

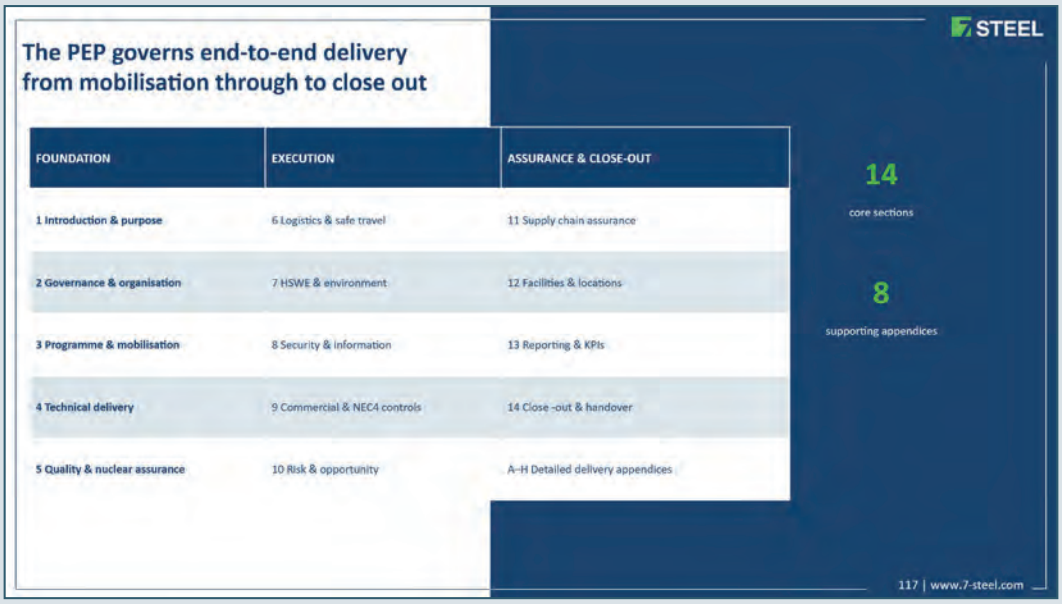
Of key interest was how rather than focusing on a single machine, the presentation followed the digital and production workflow: **Design > Test > Scheduling > Production > Automation > Logistics**.

This demonstrates how reinforcement data can move from the design model into validation and production planning, before being converted into automatically welded, tailored mesh elements and organised for delivery and installation. Software developments ensure smooth connection special mesh machinery and allow for variation from project-to-project while retaining the productivity, consistency and control of industrialised production. For the fabricator and the contractor digital prefabricated reinforcement is a win:win. The fabricator benefits from a higher-value product, increased productivity, better planning and capacity utilisation and the development of stronger, long-term customer relationships. For the contractor, automated prefabrication means less on-site labour, faster fixing and installation, safer sites and documented quality.





Documented quality was a theme of the next presentation given by John Collins, Head of Operations & Major Projects, at 7-Steel. He discussed the delivery of reinforcement for what is currently Europe's largest project, Hinkley Point C. The scale of the project is underlined by a range of impressive statistics: 261k





tonnes of reinforcement, 9.3 million couplers and 4.4 million headed bars supplied by September 2026. Collins explained how three factories worked as one network rather than three independent suppliers. All three worked together under one Project Execution Plan (PEP) which defined how the reinforcement supply delivery was executed, monitored and controlled.

Collins highlighted how the key to the success of the reinforcement supply and delivery was control. This includes a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual governance check that keeps all supply elements under control as part of a structured quality and accountability process. Regular updates and reviews ensure the validity of this process. His final piece of advice for projects was to ensure that you get the basics right: who, what, when, where and how.

The final presentation addressed a challenge facing not just the UK reinforcement sector but the construction industry as a whole: the shortage of skilled workers. Werner Wijne, Category Manager Steel at Royal BAM Group nv, asked the very relevant question of 'wo will fix the steel of tomorrow?'. He forwarded how the shortage of steel fixers is a result of Brexit with many skilled worked returning home particularly to Easten Europe, an ageing population and retirement of skilled workers not being matched by incoming next generation and construction growth requiring workforce expansion.

Wijne referred to a robust training programme and well-paid salary structure. For instance, there are recognised steel fixer apprenticeship routes, CITB funding, NVQ certification and a clear career path towards supervisor and site management roles. However, it is calculated that the UK needs 400 new steel fixers every year.

Wijne pointed to the potential of automation and prefabrication to lessen the impact of skilled worker shortage. However, despite this there will remain an insufficient supply of skilled and experienced steel fixers. He concluded with a warning: " For us at BAM, I would classify the market as a sustainable scarcity market where experienced steel fixers and supervisors represent the highest economic value and given the scarcity will be our largest risk for the continuation of projects."

Steve Elliott, BAR Chairman, concluded the seminar by thanking the speakers for their valued insight and presentations that offered much 'food for thought'. He also thanked the attendees for their time and input, for only by encouraging discussion and collaboration can the challenges facing the UK reinforcement sector be addressed.

7-STEEL INVESTMENT

Sev.en Global Investments (Sev.en GI), owners of Cardiff-based 7 Steel UK, has announced plans to invest almost £100 million in the business. The investment will cover plant upgrades, technology improvements and wider operational development.

7 Steel UK produces more than one million tonnes of steel a year and directly employs close to 1,600 people across the UK. Using Electric Arc Furnace technology, the Cardiff plant recycles domestic scrap into low-carbon steel for construction, infrastructure, transport and energy projects. Its products have gone into some of the country's most recognisable buildings and infrastructure, including The Shard, Wembley Stadium, the Heathrow Terminal 5 extension, Hinkley Point C nuclear power station and HS2.

The investment arrives at an important moment for British steel. The government has set out plans to build 1.5 million new homes and strengthen national infrastructure, both of which will require significant volumes of steel. Sev.en GI says the new policy direction reinforces its case for long-term investment in the sector.

Alan Svoboda, CEO of Sev.en Global Investments, said: "As the long-term owners of 7 Steel UK, we recognise the strategic importance of a robust independent British steel sector.

"Steel is a strategic industrial opportunity which requires continuity and a willingness to invest through the cycle. That is exactly how we invest."

Beyond capital investment, Sev.en GI has said it is committed to the workforce. 7 Steel UK pays 1.5 times the national median salary and continues to train the next generation of engineers, helping to keep skilled industrial jobs in Cardiff and across the UK.

Looking ahead, 7 Steel UK has outlined ambitions to develop a £30 million hydrogen-ready furnace, for which it is currently seeking financial support.

Steelmaking in Cardiff stretches back to the late 19th century. East Moors Works, opened in 1891, played a central role in the city's growth and in Britain's wider industrial development. Although the original works closed in 1978, the industry continued to evolve. 7 Steel UK is the direct continuation of that history, and Sev.en GI says it intends to carry it forward.





7 STEEL STRENGTHENS
LONG-STANDING HEATHROW RELATIONSHIP

7 Steel UK, the leading low-carbon steel producer, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Heathrow, strengthening a relationship spanning more than two decades as the airport progresses its expansion plans.

The partnership reflects Heathrow's wider commitment to supporting domestic manufacturing, following its signing of the UK Steel Charter in 2025, which pledged to prioritise UK-made steel. Building on 7 Steel UK's established track record with Heathrow – which has seen more than 150,000 tonnes of steel supplied over the past 20 years, including for the construction of Terminal 5 – the partnership lays the foundations for supporting Heathrow's future expansion plans.

The Government estimates that Heathrow's proposed expansion, including a third runway, could require up to 400,000 tonnes of steel during construction, highlighting the potential scale of demand for UK-made steel and the role of domestic producers in supplying major infrastructure projects.

Carles Rovira, CEO of 7 Steel UK, said: "This agreement with Heathrow is a landmark moment for UK steelmaking and a powerful vote of confidence in the future of our industry. Heathrow's commitment to using UK-made steel demonstrates how major infrastructure projects can support the UK steel industry, domestic manufacturing, sustain highly skilled jobs and strengthen supply chains across the country.

"From our Cardiff base, we at 7 Steel are proud to be the UK's leading producer of low-carbon, circular steel from 100% UK scrap and to have supported Heathrow's development for more than twenty years, including the construction of Terminal 5. This new partnership creates a strong foundation for future investment, supporting the work that the 7 Steel UK team and the rest of the stakeholders are doing every day.

"Expansion at Heathrow has the potential to be a catalyst for growth far beyond the airport itself. By placing UK steel at the heart of this nationally significant project, Heathrow is helping to demonstrate that reindustrialisation can be delivered through practical partnerships that create jobs, drive economic growth and support the transition to a more sustainable economy."

The agreement comes as the Government's Steel Strategy sets out ambitions to revitalise the UK steel sector, increase the proportion of domestic demand met by UK production and support the transition to lower-carbon steelmaking. Major infrastructure projects have a role to play in these ambitions by creating opportunities for UK manufacturers to supply materials for the country's future development.

Thomas Woldbye, CEO of Heathrow, said: "Expanding Heathrow would deliver real opportunities for people across the whole of the UK. This MoU is one such example. If expansion is approved, the MoU we signed today can help revitalise UK steelmaking and drive economic growth in South Wales. Our ambition to put Welsh-made steel at the heart of our expansion plans will create a pipeline of future orders for UK steel, and we hope that the scale of our project will lead the way for other large infrastructure projects to follow suit. We're proud to be strengthening our relationship with 7 Steel UK, with businesses across South Wales and to be helping to drive a new era of industrial growth."

PROGRESS GROUP
PROGRESS MASCHINEN & AUTOMATION

JUST-IN-TIME AND FULLY FLEXIBLE PROGRESS

For rebar processors chasing higher flexibility without compromising on throughput a new generation of mesh welding technology is proving to be a genuine gamechanger. Progress Maschinen & Automation's M-System family, and its high-performance Power Mesh variant in particular, is redefining what a single production line can achieve, and one European fabricator's experience shows exactly why.

Flexibility for more variety of products

The M-System product family has built its reputation on accuracy, flexibility and just-in-time production of bespoke mesh welded directly from coil. The machine's modular design allows individual requirements to be accommodated without compromising precision or speed. A key part of the business case is efficiency and flexibility. The welding process keeps power consumption low, while production runs without cutting waste and without complicated re-cutting of finished mesh. Manufacturing is carried out directly from CAD specifications, with wire diameters ranging from 5mm to 16mm, providing both flexibility and dimensional accuracy across a wide range of mesh designs.



Engineered for high performance

Within the M-System range, the PowerMesh mesh welding plant is defined above all by its production capacity. A double-line longitudinal and crosswire straightening machine speeds up steel preparation, while the number of welding heads can be adjusted to match the desired output, allowing the plant to be configured precisely to each producer's throughput requirements. The clearest demonstration of this performance philosophy is the Twin MSR cutting and straightening system, which is part of the Power Mesh. After switching from a slower, single-strand machine to the Twin MSR, one Progress customer reported doubling their output almost overnight. A striking illustration of the productivity gains now within reach for producer still relying on older, single-line equipment, and a clear signal that upgrading pays for itself in performance alone.

Built for just-in-time production

Beyond raw output, the machinery is designed with modern just-in-time production models in mind. Adjustable straightening, collection and logistics systems can be configured around each producer's requirements, allowing bars to move seamlessly from processing straight into dispatch-ready batches. This tight integration reduces the need for intermediate storage and buffer stock which is a critical advantage for fabricators looking to keep material moving rather than piling up on the shop floor.

The verdict for UK

For UK rebar fabricators evaluating their next investment, the message from Progress Group's customers is clear: performance, flexibility and space efficiency no longer need to be traded off against one another. Between the modular, low-waste M-System range and the high-output Twin MSR, Progress Maschinen & Automation offers processors a way to scale production intelligently, without the cost and complexity of a second line.


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BAR: THE BUSINESS BENEFITS

Membership of BAR offers several business benefits. In addition, to forwarding the UK reinforcement sector via the provision of an industry forum, the input to British Standards and regulations and the publication of best practices guidance, BAR membership provides specific business benefits. These include:



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- Access to and liaison with key industry organisations such as UK Steel, the Mineral Products Association, CONSTRUCT, and The Concrete Centre. Such liaison is not limited to the UK but is being developed internationally, for example with the Steel Reinforcement Institution of Australia,
- Free editorial promotion of member projects, products and services and raising of business profile via the BAR Reinforce annual magazine which is disseminated widely to the construction industry as well as placement of member project and product case studies on its website and linkedin platform,
- Opportunities to present at the BAR annual industry seminar specific to the UK reinforcement sector.

All of the above are aimed at providing BAR members with the platforms to help raise their business profile with potential customers and employees.

To find out more and request a BAR membership form, use the BAR contact form at:
https://www.uk-bar.org/Contact-Us

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