

## Scotland is in desperate need of engineers, says **Richard McClelland**

**S**TIRLING played host to Technical Academy Scotland yesterday, bringing together major employers in the private and the public sectors to witness the launch of a new private learning provider. Technical Academy Scotland will deliver academic and vocational programmes across a wide range of construction disciplines.

As Scotland edges out of recession, voices across the construction and engineering sectors are warning of a potentially disastrous skills shortage which could hamper the full recovery of these areas of our economy. This is reinforced by the findings of a survey we have undertaken that indicates almost half (46 per cent) of employers across the public and private sectors are facing significant difficulties finding skilled technicians and engineers.

Current estimates indicate that the UK needs to double the pipeline of new recruits into the engineering, construction and manufacturing professions by 2020.

With a quarter of the Scottish construction workforce likely to retire within the next 10-20 years, according to the Office for National Statistics, and the Royal Academy of Engineering forecasting that 40,000 engineering graduates are needed annually across the UK, there are concerns that not enough people are pursuing a career in engineering and construction.

It is against this background that we are launching Technical Academy Scotland to assist in addressing these shortages.

In Scotland, the challenge is not only at the technical level but is a more fundamental one. It is vital that we ensure that there is a greater take-up of maths, science, technology and engineering subjects at school and university. This will feed through into the development of our construction professionals of tomorrow. We must also ensure that young people are made aware of the employment opportunities on offer in construction and engineering.

Organisations such as Technical Academy Scotland are working hard to increase the number of women taking up jobs in engineering and construction. There is no denying the fact that women are under-represented at a time when industry needs to be tapping into every potential talent pool.

● *Richard McClelland is director of Technical Academy Scotland*