

Electrical Contractors' Association

2026 Wales Manifesto

**GROWING THE WELSH ECONOMY
SPEARHEADING ELECTRIFICATION
MODERNISING SAFE AND RELIABLE SYSTEMS
SEIZING TECHNICAL PROGRESS OPPORTUNITIES**

www.eca.co.uk



Who we are

ECA is the leading electrical trade association in Wales, established in 1901 we have been powering change in the industry for 125 years.



7,600

Electricians and apprentices working in Wales



£3.5 Billion

Value of the electrotechnical industry to Wales' economy



In December 2015, there were 13,400 electricians working in Wales. Today, there are only 7,600 electricians and apprentices working in Wales.

What the Welsh electrical industry needs:

- More electrical apprentice starts in Wales
- Better procurement policies and practices which support small business and mandate fair payment terms
- A workforce competent to deliver the complexities and risks of modern, smart technologies.

What we are calling for in this Manifesto:

- Support for small businesses to take on more apprentices
- Strengthen the business environment for increased electrification.
- Safety and competence embedded as a principle in legislation for all electrification standards.



1. Increasing the size and quality of apprenticeship provision

The Problem

The ECA's Skills Charter states that Wales lacks enough qualified electricians. The country needs a minimum of 700 new electrical apprentices every year, to maintain the size of the current workforce. **For 2024/25, the latest available figures show that only 435 electrical apprentices started training in Wales.**

The Impact

The skilled electrical workforce is currently not large enough to seize all the business opportunities for Wales afforded by increased electrification and digitisation.

We are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

Agree a joint industry and government strategy and plan for increasing annual electrical apprentice starts and completions in Wales.

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

Monitor and take action to maximise progression rates from classroom based qualifications into apprenticeships.

Include ambitious skills development targets into public contracts.



“Apprenticeship funding, in its current form, is not delivering what the electrical industry in Wales urgently needs. While the intention behind the funding model is positive —supporting skills development and creating a pipeline of qualified Electricians —the reality on the ground is very different. Electrical employers face increasing administrative burdens, inconsistent access to funds, and training requirements that often fail to reflect the technical demands of the sector.”

**Andrew Hutchins, Chair of ECA
South Wales Executive Committee**

2. Improving procurement processes to support small business

The Problem

Compliance with procurement policies is patchy. Public sector buyers often miss the 30 day payment target, while the private sector 'borrows' money from SMEs through delayed payment terms.

The Impact

Businesses need stronger payment certainty to unlock growth and prevent liquidation

We are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

Strengthen enforcement of SME-friendly procurement and prompt payment commitments.

Ensure rigorous application of new exclusion powers for poor performance and promote transparent reporting on contractor delivery standards.

Accelerate rollout of digital payment innovations to improve the resilience of the supply chain.



“Until the abuse of retentions is resolved, and maximum payment terms are introduced, we leave the door open to unfair practices which inhibit growth by allowing big business to borrow cash from SMEs through delayed payment.”

Rob Driscoll – ECA’s Director of Legal and Business



3. Safety and competence embedded as a principle in legislation for all electrification standards.

The Problem

The regulatory landscape for new builds and retrofits remains fragmented, inconsistent and poorly enforced.

The Impact

While developers lack certainty, the impact on consumers is even more serious. As well as missing out on cost savings and energy efficiencies, they risk losing access to the safe, reliable electricity they have come to expect.



‘Only by understanding and installing the right technology for a building can the energy efficiency, cost savings, and emissions targets be met. Unsuitable technology can have safety implications, increase energy use and dent consumer trust.’

Jane Dawson - ECA's Head of External Affairs

We are calling on the next Welsh Government to:

Embed safety as a principle in all policy changes, by recognising the competence required by the electrical installer.

Mandate that all new homes are electric ready and in compliance with building regulations.



POWERING PROGRESS TOGETHER.

ECA believes that broader and deeper collaboration with Welsh Government, public bodies, and the electrical industry is essential for Wales to become a more prosperous country.

We urge all political parties to seize the benefits of electrification, which provide vast numbers of well paid jobs and long term careers, and represent technological progress.

By rapidly adopting digital and smart electrification, Wales has the chance to attract global investment and kick start an economic boom.

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