

749 | 0
Views | CrossRef citations to date | Altmetric

Original Articles

Canary in the coal mine: What Carillion's collapse reveals about construction's productivity conundrum

Rod Sweet

Pages 3-8 | Published online: 14 Mar 2018

[Download citation](#) <https://doi.org/10.1080/20450249.2018.1447062>

Sample our
Built Environment
Journals
>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

[Full Article](#)[Figures & data](#)[Citations](#)[Metrics](#)[Reprints & Permissions](#)[Get access](#)

Abstract

Research commissioned by construction company Mace suggests that the UK could realise enormous financial gains if construction boosted its productivity the way manufacturing has done, and Mace calls on the government to make that happen. However, this article proposes that real construction productivity improvement is impossible under the current contracting business model because the twinned tensions of functional fragmentation and cost-competitive tendering prevent the necessary investment in capacity growth. Using what is known about troubled Carillion projects, such as the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, it argues that not only did Carillion fail because of these tensions, but that government colludes in perpetuating them. Only government can disrupt the downward productivity cycle in

which industry is trapped. In the face of the gathering skills crisis, not doing so will lead both to more corporate casualties and the domestic industry's decreasing ability

to build the housing and infrastructure the country needs.

[← Previous article](#)

[View issue table of contents](#)

[Next article >](#)



Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by

[Normalising deviance in construction project organizations: a case study on the collapse of Carillion >](#)

Sara Hajikazemi et al.

Construction Management and Economics

Published online: 9 Aug 2020

[Carillion and our unvirtuous circle >](#)

Rod Sweet

Construction Research and Innovation

Published online: 14 Mar 2018

[Not-so-sudden death: How Carillion disguised its ailing finances just enough >](#)

David Rogers

Construction Research and Innovation

Published online: 1 Jun 2018

[View more](#)

Information for

[Authors](#)

[R&D professionals](#)

[Editors](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Societies](#)

Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)

[Advertising solutions](#)

[Accelerated publication](#)

[Corporate access solutions](#)

Open access

[Overview](#)

[Open journals](#)

[Open Select](#)

[Dove Medical Press](#)

[F1000Research](#)

Help and information

[Help and contact](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[All journals](#)

[Books](#)

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



Sign me up



[Copyright © 2022 Informa UK Limited](#) [Privacy policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#)

[Accessibility](#)



Taylor & Francis Group
an **informa** business

Registered in England & Wales No. 3099067
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG