



Mr John Witherow  
Editor  
The Times  
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*Dear Mr Witherow*

**OPPORTUNITY GRANTS – COMMENTARY BY CLARE FOGES 17 FEB 20**

Clare Foges' commentary on the need for the Government and the new Chancellor in particular, to make a meaningful statement in the form of an Opportunity Grant, struck a deep cord with me.

For nearly 20 years the road marking industry, our small contribution to the construction sector, ran a very successful apprenticeship scheme that transformed untrained potential into a skilled, certified and well paid resource. Our member companies paid the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) levy and were able to draw down from CITB the cost of putting apprentices through the scheme. This worked extremely well for all involved and most employers were able to recover most of their costs.

This highly effective way of ensuring a sustainable workforce was destroyed when Government morphed apprenticeships into 'Trailblazers' and along with it, introduced the Apprenticeship Levy. The effect was twofold. The rules for 'Trailblazers' were written so onerously that our scheme could not become recognised and our larger member companies were, and still are, penalised financially in having to pay both the Apprenticeship Levy and that of the CITB. In a very short period, our industry went from having a system that rewarded employers for investing in training their staff, to one that now penalises them, paying twice the levy for no material benefit.

Others have commented previously on the failure of the Apprenticeship Levy initiative to achieve its goals and that it was extremely difficult for small industry sectors to obtain any benefit. Our industry experience is just one such example. Clare's suggestion of an Opportunity Grant could, perhaps, see the situation in our industry returned to the level playing field we hear so much about from our politicians.

Be brave Mr Sunak, give responsible employers caught in this trap a reasonable incentive; they will deliver the workforce needed.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Scott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Scott  
Chairman  
Road Safety Markings Association

18 Feb 20