

Building
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We need state aid

Relying on PFI is folly, says **Julia Evans**

Delays to the £5bn college programme and the £47bn Building Schools for the Future initiative have emerged less than three months after Alistair Darling's pre-Budget promise to boost infrastructure spending.

This is a worrying development. His commitments were, initially, welcome news to our members as public sector contracts will play a vital role in this economic climate. What we are worried about is that he expects to pay for the work by selling land and borrowing through the PFI. This is a clear folly. Centralised funding is needed.

While billions have been poured into banks and the car industry, it is time for a similar injection of direct funding into construction. Where the automotive industry employs about 800,000, construction employs nearly 1.5 million.

If the construction sector is allowed to decline further, as well as the huge potential job losses, its capacity to help build for the upturn will be reduced. Julia Evans is chief executive of the National Federation of Builders