

BCIS Webinar – The reality check: benchmarking for increased cost confidence

On 5 June 2025, BCIS held a webinar entitled ‘The reality check: benchmarking for increased cost confidence’. During the webinar, attendees had the opportunity to submit questions.

Below is a selection of the questions that were submitted, with answers from BCIS Head of Data Services, Karl Horton.

Q: I've found the depth of sample locally doesn't generate market facing data. What are your thoughts?

A: BCIS location factors are calculated using analysis of tender costs within different locations, so they will reflect the tendering climate. That said, we actively encourage our subscribers to share project data in all regions to allow us to continue to produce tender price studies and associated factors, e.g. location factors.

Q: If you are benchmarking for improvement, how do you identify the best figure to benchmark against?

A: We would recommend you start by defining what you're trying to benchmark, e.g. a process, a metric? Is the focus internal or external? Next, establish what ‘best’ means. Are the KPIs quantitative or qualitative? Understand who you are comparing against and if they are credible comparators.

Q: Do you see much data / benchmarking relating to nuclear sector type projects?

A: There is limited data on nuclear sector type projects within BCIS. However, we are looking to capture more infrastructure sector data in the future, assisted by initiatives such as the release of BCIS Form.

Q: When a project, such as a utility infrastructure project, doesn't align with the standard NRM format, what is the best alternative approach to follow?

A: Use the Civil Engineering Standard Method of Measurement (CESMM). CESMM is specifically designed for infrastructure-type works. It includes categories such as earthworks, pipelines, ducts, and roads, which are typical in utility infrastructure.

Q: When will BCIS Form be available and will it require any changes to our subscription?

A: We're targeting the end of 2025 for release. Full details on any changes to subscriptions will be announced as part of the release documentation. You can register your interest to hear about BCIS Form updates by [filling out this form](#).

Q: Does the BCIS form provide an option to keep confidential commercial information private?

A: Yes, completely confidential. Each organisation will have a secure area on BCIS Form for users to login, capture, manage and benchmark their data. BCIS will not be able to see the data inputted, but the users will have the option (which we will of course encourage) to share the data with BCIS for analysis and, if appropriate, publish.

Q: In your experience, if you capture overrun costs from a project, do you have a methodology to separate the embedded risk on those costs, so you can benchmark data more consistently?

A: Identifying cost drivers is a good way to start to manage risk on projects. By understanding the impact each cost driver has on project costs, the estimator can start to adjust benchmarks from a position of "DID" cost to "SHOULD" cost.

Q: Do you see any increase in demand for large scale EV charging infrastructure and will the government support it?

A: There should be, although the market for EVs seems to have slumped over the last year. Demand will be driven by government policy on fossil fuels, which feeds into demand for alternatives. Given the number of EVs currently, I would have thought that EV charging infrastructure provision would have to grow to support.

Q: If faced with NDA restrictions during the data gathering stage, what is the most effective way to the data so that confidential details remain fully protected?

A: At project level, there are simple things that can be done, such as removing project titles and accordingly, e.g. project 1, 2, 3. Comparison of key items such as steel prices or concrete costs could be shared (with the appropriate context) without commercial sensitivities.

Q: How do you capture the bias in project cost created by the perception?

A: Tracking costs through the life of a project would help start to build a picture on how costs perform against the original estimate.

Q: How can I overcome the challenges to get the references?

A: Where a lack of data exists, we would suggest a couple of actions. Firstly, and if applicable, look to create a data collection process where project costs start to get gathered and stored ready for analysis (e.g. using something like BCIS Form). Secondly, as is often the case in the Middle East, you could start with UK cost data and then look to apply an international location factor to adjust to, say, Dubai. As always, the converted number should be treated with the necessary caution if quoting elsewhere. Over time, if you have implemented a data collection process, you will be able to start to cross-reference the UK-adjusted data against your internal data and make the necessary refinements.

Q: How to deal with the variables that drive costs, it feels almost impossible to capture enough metrics to cover every cost driver in a project?

A: As mentioned during the webinar, it is not practical to try to benchmark everything. The key is to keep things simple to start with and then add more metrics over time.

Q: Do cost analyses outturn costs or just tender costs?

A: BCIS cost analyses represent tender costs, not outturn costs. In the future, with the introduction of BCIS Form, we will explore gathering and introducing cost data at different stages of the project life.

Q: Where do we find the international location factors that BCIS has produced

A: You can find more information about our International Average Building Prices on the [BCIS website](#).