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BCA welcomes the Construction Products Association's 2006 *Achievable Targets, Is Government Delivering* report.

The British Cement Association welcomes the publication of the CPA's *Achievable Targets, Is Government Delivering*. The report, launched on 8 November, provides an assessment of the progress Government has made during 2006 to deliver essential services for hospitals, houses, schools and transport infrastructure.

We are pleased that the Government's new build programme for hospitals is on target, but disappointed that the schools programme has made a very slow start. While there have been notable improvements made during 2006, many of the Government's own targets have not been achieved or the progress towards meeting them is behind schedule.

For the cement industry it is particularly disappointing that the level of investment in the built environment in the UK lags significantly behind the remainder of Europe. Construction output represents only 8% of GDP in the UK; the EU average is 12%, with some member states achieving close to 20%. There is no sign that the UK will get off the bottom of the EU league.

Mike Gilbert, chief executive of the British Cement Association, commented: "Multinational companies with a production base in the UK, particularly characteristic of the UK cement industry, will question the competitiveness of continuing to manufacture in the UK when making international comparisons. Government needs to commit in its comprehensive spending review to capital investment in transport infrastructure, housing and schools if there is going to be a vibrant construction sector in the UK."

The report highlights that the UK needs greater and longer term capital investment in its road and rail network. This is fundamental to the delivery of materials essential to the development of UK infrastructure. The British Cement Association fully supports the recommendation that following the Eddington Review, the Government should publish a clear strategic programme of planned enhancement to the road and rail network over the next 10-15 years. This would help industry when drawing up its own capital investment programme.

If the built environment in the UK is to be fit for the 21st Century, Government will need to devise a coherent strategy for investment in sustainable construction, in order to deliver longer term housing, schools and transport infrastructure. The cement industry stands ready to work with the Government to ensure delivery of a sustainable built environment.

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Notes to editors:

The British Cement Association (BCA) is the trade and research organisation that represents the interests of the United Kingdom's cement industry in its relations with Her Majesty's Government, the European Union and relevant organisations in the United Kingdom. The members of the BCA (Buxton Lime Industries, Castle Cement, Cemex Cement UK and Lafarge Cement UK) are the major domestic manufacturers of Portland cement producing over 90% of the cement sold in the UK.

The cement industry has an annual turnover of £775 million and is a major supplier to the construction industry. It employs around 3,400 people directly with a further 15,000 jobs depending upon its operations.