

A ground-breaking career opportunity: HS2 confirms first tunnelling operative apprenticeships

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Just days after the historic launch of its first giant tunnelling machine 'Florence', HS2's construction partner Align JV has announced that it is recruiting nine new apprentices to play a part in the monumental programme of work to dig the 10 mile twin bore tunnels under the Chilterns.

The Level Two tunnelling operative apprenticeships will be managed by Align's tier two contractor, TG Tunnelling, a North London-based business which has established itself as one of the most highly respected and fastest growing companies within the industry.

All nine jobs will be based at the South Portal of the Chilterns tunnel, just inside the M25 near Ruislip, where HS2's 2,000 tonne tunnel boring machines begin their journey underground.

With just weeks to go until HS2's second tunnelling machine 'Cecilia' launches from the site, TG Tunnelling and Align are eager to bring their new recruits on board. They are working closely with Training Providers J3M and Qualitrain to design a development programme that will enable the successful candidates to learn

from, and work with, the experts who will manage the logistics and maintenance of the 3.5 year-long tunnelling operation.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said: "The first specialist tunnelling apprenticeships on HS2 are a hugely exciting opportunity for young people to work right at the heart of this vital project. As well as boosting their careers, these apprentices will play a significant role in building better connections between our towns and cities.

"As well as creating thousands of contract opportunities for British businesses, HS2 will leave a lasting skills legacy in the UK by supporting tens of thousands of jobs and opening up opportunities for people to retrain and upskill."

Jhen-Nel Swanson, HS2's Skills Manager for the Central region said: "Providing entry-level roles aligned to some of the most sophisticated engineering elements of the project is a clear sign of our commitment to upskill the next generation and leave a lasting skills legacy.

"This level of investment has never been more important as we strive to bounce back from the effects of the pandemic, and we're committed to ensuring that local people benefit from these and thousands of other job opportunities on HS2."

HS2 has committed to creating 2,000 apprenticeships during the life cycle of the project and has already passed the 500 new apprentice starts milestone. The nine apprenticeships announced today form part of Align's commitment to create 100 apprenticeships from the 1,200 roles it expects to recruit to deliver its 21.6km section of Britain's new high speed railway.

Tina Bailey, HR Director at Align Joint Venture said: "This is a unique opportunity for nine individuals to begin their construction career supporting the development of the Chiltern tunnels and the Colne Valley Viaduct, which are two of the most eye-catching and challenging engineering projects on the entire HS2 route.

"We actively encourage applications from local people, particularly those who are unemployed, and really hope to attract interest from female candidates, the under 25s and those with disabilities."

The tunnelling operative apprentice roles are designed to spearhead a long and successful career in construction, tunnelling and complex engineering. The apprenticeship programme will last for two years, with successful candidates receiving dedicated support throughout their learning journey. The programme combines a wide range of on-the-job practical experiences, alongside a study programme which will account for twenty percent of the candidates' time.

Neil Hancox, Chair of TunnelSkills said: "This apprenticeship programme will take emerging talent on a journey of learning and discovery in the tunnelling sector. This is an exciting time for the industry and this investment will lead to a highly qualified and experienced workforce for the future."

TG Tunnelling is eager to hear from people of all ages, whether they are starting out in their career, or simply looking for a new opportunity that provides long-term career prospects. It stipulates that candidates

must have a passion for learning and a genuine interest in starting a meaningful career within the construction sector.

Tommy Gallagher Jr, Director at TG Tunnelling said: "It's a unique opportunity to begin your tunnelling career on Europe's biggest infrastructure project and we're proud to play a leading role in developing Britain's pipeline of future tunnelling talent.

"Our apprentices who worked on Crossrail have all gone on to secure full-time roles within the industry and I have every confidence that our new recruits will have a prosperous career ahead of them in the ever growing UK Tunnelling market."

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd