

Andy Street Visits Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV) Skills Academy

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West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street, has visited the Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV) Skills Academy at South and City College Birmingham's Bordesley Green campus.

While there, he welcomed news that 3,000 more local people are set to benefit from employment opportunities on HS2.

The Balfour Beatty VINCI Skills Academy sits within one of Birmingham's most deprived wards. It first opened its doors in November 2021, as part of a dedicated drive to upskill local people ready for work on HS2.

Since it opened with £1.1m backing from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the Skills Academy has supported local people who were out of work into a job or onto further training in readiness for their chosen career path supporting HS2's construction.

The Mayor and Cllr Ian Courts, Chair of the HS2 Regional Enterprise Board, and leader of Solihull Council, welcomed the news that the Skills Academy is gearing up to train more people, ready to transition into

3,000 jobs over the next four years with Balfour Beatty VINCI's labour supply chain partners.

The Mayor said: "One of the main reasons I fought so hard to secure HS2 for the West Midlands was the local jobs it would create, and so it is brilliant to see that coming to fruition now.

"This exciting collaboration between Balfour Beatty VINCI and South and City College Birmingham, supported by our funding, is helping to give thousands of local people the opportunity to find high-quality and well-paid jobs as part of this once-in-a-generation infrastructure project. This Skills Academy is exactly the kind of initiative that helps those who have fallen out of work find employment as part of my 100k jobs plan."

HS2 Minister, Andrew Stephenson said: "HS2 is about boosting transport, driving business and creating thousands of long lasting jobs that will level up the nation.

"Balfour Beatty Skills Academy embodies all of this, not only supporting local jobs but giving workers the opportunity to upskill for free and gain valuable experience working on Europe's biggest infrastructure project."

The BBV Skills Academy is the first of its kind in the region, but plans are in place to open more centres across the Midlands, making it easier for local people to gain the free training, accreditation and support they need to begin a career on HS2.

BBV estimates it will support circa 7,000 jobs to deliver its programme of work on HS2, and in the West Midlands, it is estimated that the construction of HS2 will generate a constant labour demand of around 10,000 jobs from now until 2027/28.

Shilpi Akbar, Balfour Beatty VINCI's Head of Skills, Employment and Education, said: "At Balfour Beatty VINCI, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing employment opportunities for people across the region. It is one of our top priorities and a core reason we launched our Skills Academy at South and City College last year.

"We want everyone – particularly those who are currently unemployed – to join us and realise the wide range of benefits that can be derived from a career in the construction and infrastructure industry; careers that will take shape and flourish while working to deliver Britain's new high-speed railway."

At the Bordesley Green campus, thanks to BBV's partnership venture with South and City College Birmingham, students can gain hands on experience in plant machinery operation, traffic and fire marshalling, alongside nationally recognised accreditation from the Construction Skills Certification Scheme.

With no previous experience or skills required, students typically complete BBV's specialist general operatives training programme in four to six weeks, enabling them to progress onto a paid work trial in their preferred construction career field. On successful completion of the trial, candidates are job matched to roles with BBV's local labour providers, where they begin their career on HS2.

In a short space of time, the programme has supported people of all ages and backgrounds who were formerly unemployed into work.

René Nunes from Birmingham was unemployed for two years and was eager to find a job that provided long term security. Through HS2's job brokerage partner model, which sees its contractors work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and National Careers Service to support local people who are out of work into a job on HS2, René was referred to the Skills Academy and onto the general operatives training programme. He is now working full time at HS2's construction site in Water Orton and is a vital part of the facilities and maintenance team.