

Apprentices from Northern pay a visit to CAF's Newport facility

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Engineering apprentices from train operator, Northern, broadened their knowledge of state-of-the-art train production and gained valuable hands-on experience during a visit to CAF's Newport facility in South Wales.

The five engineering apprentices were invited to the factory along with two CAF apprentice engineers who work at Northern's Allerton and Newton Heath Traincare centres.

The group was given a comprehensive insight into the facility's operations, encompassing all five production zones, and the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of CAF-built Transport for Wales Class 197 DMUs for the Wales and Borders network.

Mentored and supported by the CAF production team, the apprentices assisted with wiring cable looms, positioning internal equipment such as body panels and electrical equipment and underframe equipment like bogies, fuel tanks and brake equipment. A combined 188 professional hours invested throughout the week; this involvement saw a team of

dedicated engineers imparting invaluable technical knowledge and experience to enhance the professional development and future succession of the apprentices.

Darren Cumner, Rolling Stock COO comments: "We were delighted to welcome the apprentices to our Newport facility to support their learning journey and enable them to experience first-hand the very latest technological advances in train production."

Dave Lowe, General Manager, CAF Rail UK said: "For the 331 and 195 fleets Northern work with CAF to provide the technical expertise as design authority, fleet performance, fault diagnosis and corrective repairs as well as management of all spares and equipment overhauls. The planned maintenance activities performed by Northern are integral to providing the joint maintenance service and this cross-functional relationship is managed very closely to ensure that there are no gaps in the overall process. The key to success is a strong relationship between both parties to continuously drive improvement."

Paul Wilkinson, Northern's Engineering Apprenticeship Manager, added: "The CAF facility visit was a day to remember for our apprentices and an insightful learning experience."

Feedback from the apprentices was extremely positive.

"Seeing a train come directly from Beasain, Spain, as nothing more than an empty bodyshell, through the processes of fitting all the systems of the unit to a finished product at the end is a truly remarkable experience," said Jack Caulfield, Northern Engineering Technician at Allerton Traincare Centre.

"The efficiency and ethic of the workers is a testament to the ingenuity of the systems they are fitting and through seeing their work I have found a new appreciation for the CAF units we maintain.

"Seeing the multiple stages of assembly come together in unison was definitely valuable to my work as a technician.

"It was an enriching week, and I learned a lot about not only the trains and production, but also the industry as well."

Jack Frances, CAF engineering apprentice at Northern's Newton Heath Traincare Centre, adds: "It was a great experience and for an apprentice a great way to gain further knowledge and understanding.

"As a CAF employee it gave great insight to the behind the scenes of what goes on when our units are being assembled.

"Being able to see the production process gave me better understanding of how the 195 units I work on operate and why they are assembled in the way they are."

Since the visit, all five of the Northern apprentices have completed their apprenticeships and are employed as fully skilled technicians at the Allerton, Neville Hill and Heaton Centres. The two CAF apprentices are in the final stages of their apprenticeships and will continue their employment at the Newton Heath and Allerton depots after qualifying.

In collaboration with their preferred recruitment partner, Ford & Stanley, CAF has recently welcomed three new technical apprentices to the business.

The three latest technical apprentices start at Myerscough College in September along with 18 new Northern engineering apprentices. Following the completion of their first year in June 2023, the apprentices will continue their qualification training across the four depots in Neville Hill (10 apprentices), Allerton (2 apprentices), Newton Heath (4 apprentices) and Heaton (5 apprentices).

CAF recently completed production of 58 Class 195 DMUs and 43 Class 331 EMUs for Northern.